

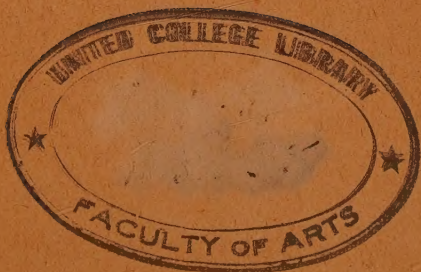
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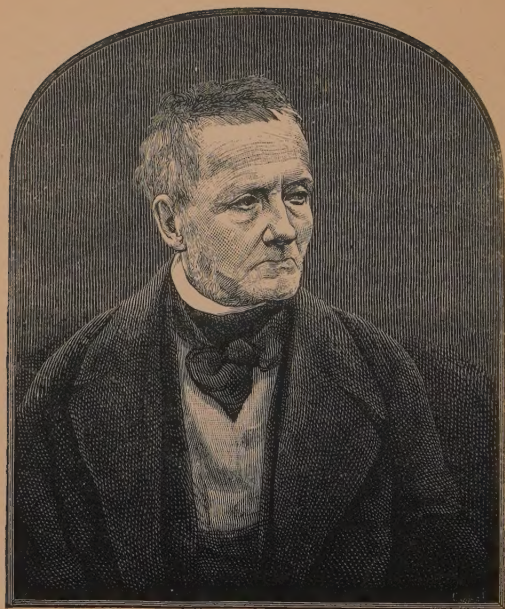
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THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

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*Ever yours most truly,
Thomas de Quincey.*

NOW EXPRESSLY ENGRAVED FROM THE ORIGINAL DAGUERRETYPE IN THE
POSSESSION OF MR. JOHN HOGG, TAKEN ABOUT 1850.

[Frontispiece.]

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THOMAS DE QUINCEY:

HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS.

With Unpublished Correspondence.

BY

ALEXANDER H. JAPP, LL.D.

(“H. A. PAGE,”)

AUTHOR OF

“MEMOIR OF HAWTHORNE,” “THOREAU: A STUDY,” “GOLDEN LIVES,”

“GERMAN LIFE AND LITERATURE,” ETC. ETC.

A NEW EDITION, THOROUGHLY REVISED, AND REARRANGED

WITH ADDITIONAL MATTER

824.81 J 35th

With Portraits, &c.



LONDON:

JOHN HOGG, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1890.

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PREFACE

TO THE NEW AND REVISED EDITION.



THIS new edition is almost a new book. Much has been added, much retrenched; many excrescences due to the circumstances under which the first edition was written pruned away. There are numerous new letters and reminiscences, as the reader will find, scattered through it—one letter, in especial, worthy of note as anew showing the good temper, patience and tact of Mr. Hogg in his connection with De Quincey in producing the Collected Works, and also another, referring to the purchase of the works, proving how completely satisfactory to De Quincey was his treatment by Mr. Hogg in monetary as in other matters.

Since the first edition appeared much has been done with regard to De Quincey biography, commentary, and criticism, notable among which are Mr. Leslie Stephen's sketch in "The Dictionary of National Biography," and Dr. Richard Garnett's

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finely sympathetic, tasteful, and keenly critical edition, in the "Parchment Library" series, of the "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater," which is much more in every respect than the leading title would indicate—an indispensable adjunct to the library of every student of De Quincey. Due acknowledgment to it in detail will be found in the volume. Nor should Mr. J. R. Findlay's genial and life-like Recollections of the later years be forgotten, enriched, as it is, with some finely-executed engravings.

As we write, a new and elaborately-annotated edition of the Collected Works is being issued under the editorship of Professor Masson, and into this edition have been drawn many of the papers which were referred to in the first edition of this memoir, as having been omitted from the original Collected Works by their author, though they were of the utmost value to De Quincey students, alike as regards the light they throw on their author in a critical and in an autobiographical sense.

Perhaps in no respect has De Quincey secured a more notably renewed attention recently than in the theological field. His article "On the Supposed Scriptural Expression for Eternity" has met with appreciative commentary from the ablest pens in that field, a certain direction of the currents of thought with regard to the central questions in Eschatology owning stimulus and force from that article. Scattered through his works are many passages which have very direct bearings on theo-

logical questions, and these many in the rising generation will doubtless be glad to have in a form fitted for easy reference. All this presupposes an awakened interest in the author, which it is hoped the present work may do something further to gratify.

As in the case of the first edition, so in this, I have to thank Mrs. Baird Smith and Miss de Quincey for much help. Without their aid, indeed, the book could not have been what it is; and in spite of many defects which no doubt remain in it, the author hopes that it may be accepted as the most authoritative and the fullest Life of De Quincey to be obtained.

ALEX. H. JAPP.

March 1890.





PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.



DE QUINCEY had himself so fully told the story of his childhood and youth—with its dreams and strange sufferings—that something exceptionally interesting may be presumed to lie in the reading of letters and documents illustrating and confirming his “Confessions” and “Autobiographic Sketches”—letters and documents of which he could scarcely have had any thought when he was penning those memorials. The careful reader will see from the original matter in the earlier chapters of this book how correct and conscientious he was even in minor details, when he found it requisite to refer to them at all.

Such a nature as De Quincey’s needs to be seen in many lights before it will reveal itself with even the degree of fulness necessary to consistent interpretation. I have been much helped in my endeavour in this direction by the great kindness of Mrs. Baird Smith and Miss de Quincey, who have afforded

me free access to his papers now in their possession, and rendered me such aid as I cannot fully signalise here, though the book throughout will be found to present the proofs of it. Nor can I believe that the "Reminiscences" by Mr. James Hogg, who was so intimately associated with De Quincey in the closing years of his life, will fail to be read with interest, on account of their freshness, and the new view in some aspects that they give us of De Quincey. The same, I trust, may be said of Mr. Jacox's Recollections, and of Dr. Warburton Begbie's account of "The Last Days." Scientific students, and those interested in psychological investigations, will, no doubt, turn with special interest to Dr. Eatwell's paper on the "Medical View of De Quincey's Case," in the Appendix, which he has kindly written at the request of Mrs. Baird Smith. The story of the life, as I think, was worth being completely told: whether I have done it justice is a question for others to decide.

For valuable help and hints, in the progress of my work, which may not appear in the work itself, I have also to thank E. L. Lushington, Esq., LL.D., Professor J. Nichol, LL.D., Professor Veitch, LL.D., the Rev. W. H. Wylie, and other friends.

H. A. PAGE.

LONDON, *March* 1877.



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Note.—The three portraits are now expressly engraved from the original Daguerreotypes in the possession of Mr. John Hogg, and the view of Greenhays Hall, Manchester, has been copied from the original painting by Carse, by the kind permission of Mrs. Sutcliffe and Harry Thornber, Esq.





THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD.

ON the occasion of an unexpected audience with royalty at Frogmore, De Quincey, then a lad of sixteen, with his young companion, Lord Westport, was amiably conversed with by George III. In the course of the interview the boy was grieved to discover that the King deemed him to be of Huguenot or French extraction; but, with more tact than most boys would have shown in the circumstances, he was bold enough to remove the impression by saying, "Please your Majesty, our family has been in England since the Conquest." And on the King asking him how he knew that, he referred to the existence of the name in old books—notably in the earliest, "The Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester"—whereupon the King, who rather prided himself on his genealogical knowledge, replied, "To be sure: I know, I know."

The De Quinceys, according to the opium-eater himself, were in origin Norse—one of those families of restless, adventurous blood, ready to follow any worthy leader. They did join William the Norman, and as a reward, doubtless for good service, had privileges bestowed on them, assumed a territorial distinction from the village of Quincey in Normandy, and from thence,

as was to be expected of a family of such character, transplanted themselves to England in due course. There, by dint of discernment and prudent intermarriages, they rose to rank and influence. A younger branch of the family was among the earliest emigrants to New England; and, yielding to the democratic atmosphere in which they found themselves, they laid aside the aristocratic prefix, only to attach to the name of Quincey a distinction still more historical, as that of great American senators and men of letters. The squires, who had made good their footing in England as proprietors of the soil, have not, from whatever cause, perpetuated themselves in that guise to our day. De Quincey himself tells us that the "last of them who enjoyed any relics whatever of that territorial domain was an elder kinsman of my father."

It was really his grandfather, who owned a considerable landed property near Ashby-de-la-Zouche, or, at all events, in that district, who had married more than once, and had a very large quiverful of children—no fewer than twenty-two, as we are informed; and in the process of educating them and setting them out in the world, found his estate so encumbered that, to effect this, he had finally to sell it. The tradition regarding him is, that he was of the old-fashioned race of port-wine drinking, fox-hunting country gentlemen; and his own tendencies in this way had something to do with the necessity of parting with his patrimony, as well as the settlement of his sons in life.

In the case of so large a family as his it is evident that the sons would have to welcome such openings as offered; and if some of them went into business, and even into retail trade, the fact need not much surprise any one.

The De Quinceys, however, in the peaceful pursuits of commerce, to which they betook themselves, would seem to have been almost as successful as their ancestors in the stormier times of warfare. And Thomas De Quincey's father in this shared all the old good fortune, or what was perhaps more to the purpose, exhibited all the old enterprise and prudence. On embarking in business

the De Quinceys had laid aside, as did their kindred in America, the aristocratic prefix ; and, as we have hinted, they did not disdain to apply themselves even to retail trade. De Quincey's father figured only as plain Thomas Quincey ; and, in years previous to the birth of his distinguished son, had been engaged as partner in an extensive drapery, or linen drapery, business in Manchester under the style of Quincey & Duck. But it is probable that even then he was engaged in other undertakings. He had sold off his drapery stock or resigned his share in the "retail," and had applied himself to what was more strictly the business of a merchant, before his son could know anything of his father's engagements. He carried on extensive transactions with Portugal, America, and the West Indies. We find records of him in the course of his son's reminiscences to the effect that he was "esteemed during his life for his great integrity ;" was, besides, "a man of cultured taste, given to literary pursuits, and was himself an anonymous author ;" having written, among other things, "A Tour in the Midland Counties in 1772, with some account of another Tour in 1774," which had appeared in instalments of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and was reprinted from it with corrections and additions in a thin octavo volume, as the author said to make it "a less soporific dose for his readers." At the time of writing the author was only twenty-three or twenty-four years of age, and shows a gift of observation, practical discrimination, a love of pictures, and an eye for the picturesque.

He had married while still young a Miss Elizabeth Penson, the daughter of an English officer, a woman of very marked character and rare intellectual endowments. Of her we have this record from De Quincey's pen :—"My mother, I may mention with honour, as still more highly gifted ; for though unpretending to the name and honours of a *literary* woman, I shall presume to call her (what many literary women are not) an *intellectual* woman ; and I believe that, if ever her letters should be collected and published, they would be thought generally to exhibit as much strong and masculine sense, delivered

in as pure 'mother English,' racy and fresh with idiomatic graces, as any in our language—hardly excepting those of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu."

There were eight children of this union. Thomas was the fifth child, and was born in Manchester on the 15th August 1785. The question of De Quincey's birthplace has caused quite a lively little flutter and running fight of a friendly kind among Manchester antiquarians and literary men; and is, as yet, hardly decided with the finality we could wish. We have before us a little sheaf of letters and memoranda which have been printed in various newspapers on the subject. Seven cities contended for the honour of being the place of Homer's nativity: three houses have partizans who claim for them the honour of being De Quincey's birthplace.

One of the writers referred to is of opinion that De Quincey's father at the time of his famous son's birth did not have any town-house beyond that in connection with his place of business, which was in Old Market Street Lane (and that was not in the parish of St. Ann's, where, from registers, it is clear that the child was baptized); and by reference to a Directory, it is found that his house address was then at Moss-Side—that is, The Farm. Another holds that, after all, De Quincey may have been born at Moss-Side, which, it would seem, includes the district known as Greenhay or Greenheys. A third argues that he was born in a certain house in Princess Street, and supposes that his mother was then on a visit there, and was prematurely confined; the house in Princess Street having belonged to, and been then inhabited by, a family named Clowes, with whom the De Quinceys were intimate. The curate of St. Ann's was the Rev. Samuel Hall, to whom, as we shall see, De Quincey some years afterwards went for his daily lessons, and who was one of the closest friends of his father. One of the disputants presumes, indeed, that the sympathy between De Quincey's father and Mr. Hall may have led to the connection with the parish of St. Ann's, though the family were not then resident in the parish, and he suggests that De Quincey's father may

have been so at an earlier period. There is a kind of humorous irony in all this, especially when we remember De Quincey's own playfully expressed indifference to dates of birth, marriage, and death ; saying it was so certain that a man had been born, and born somewhere, that he married or wished to marry, and that he finally paid the penalty of nature either by being hanged or deserving hanging, that these, in comparison with other points, were, in his idea, not worth dwelling on !

If, as all the probabilities point to, Moss-Side was the birthplace, there is nothing so flagrant in naming Greenhay on the gravestone, as that is merely a later name for the same district ; nor is De Quincey's phrase that he was born in Manchester so grossly erroneous, even if this were so ; for at the time that he said he was born in Manchester, Greenhay was no longer a rural suburb, but was fast being absorbed in Manchester ; so that it would really be no more incorrect than to say of a man born in Hammersmith in 1850, that he was born in London, or of a man born in Canonmills, that he was born in Edinburgh, and De Quincey's daughters never remember him to have said that he was born elsewhere than at Greenhay.

What is clear, on documentary evidence, is, that Thomas de Quincey was baptized (*christened* the registers call it) on the 23rd of September 1785, at St. Ann's Church, by Mr. Hall ; and it is worth noting, also, that the father was buried there in 1793, as the two sisters, Jane and Elizabeth, had been. We say, then, that De Quincey was born in Manchester ; but if not born at Moss-Side, he was in a very short time after his birth transferred to his father's country-house—most probably The Farm, with which all his earlier recollections were associated. By-and-by—that is, in 1791—his father built the house at Greenhay, which is so often referred to by the son. It was, as he tells us, “a rustic solitude”—forming a sort of *terminus ad quem*, beyond which was nothing but a cluster of cottages, composing the little hamlet of Greenhill.

Mr. John Mortimer, in a paper read before the Man-

chester Literary Club on "De Quincey and Manchester," and printed in vol. v. of their papers, recalls the time when Greenhay could still be identified. He says:—

"Greenhay Lane in part is leafy yet, and some of the old mansions coeval with Greenhay still remain islanded upon oases of gardens and green slopes of smooth turf; but they are all doomed. The irresistible wave of population is advancing upon them; the jerry-builder will come, and the place that once knew them will know them no more. Wordsworth says:—

‘Nothing can bring back the hour.
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower.’

For the present writer the glory and the freshness of the dream of such an hour is associated with a vision of grass and flowers, and of a lush meadow bordering upon Greenhay, seen with a child's eye in the soft glow of the evening of a sunny day in early summer. But that meadow has long since been covered with bricks and mortar. . . . We remember the manor of Greenhay as a solid red brick house, standing among lawns and shrubberies. A stream ran through the grounds, upon which De Quincey's brother was wont to sail mimic fleets of rafts, but after becoming so foul and inky as to earn for itself the name of the Black Brook, it is now well hid away from the eyes and the noses of men. De Quincey has immortalised this house by associating it with some of the noblest examples of impassioned prose in the language. He never liked Manchester, but he seems to dwell with fondness upon the home of his childhood."

While Thomas was still a child, his father fell into such ill health that, under medical advice, he was compelled to spend nearly the whole of his time abroad. This circumstance, as may be supposed, cast a shadow over the social life of the family, and imparted to the atmosphere of the home a deep quietude, which served to add to its isolation. But the boy did not need the help of the ordinary stimulants to develop his faculties. While a mere infant, according to his own account, he was so influenced by certain aspects of



GREENHAYS HALL.

Built by De Quincey's father in 1791. De Quincey spent his early boyhood there, and it is often referred to in the "Confessions" and earlier "Autobiographic Sketches." Photographed from the original painting by Carse, by the kind permission of Mrs. Sutcliffe and Harry Thornber, Esq., to the former of whom the picture belongs. The house itself has now disappeared under the pressure of modern improvements in Manchester and City extension; it was pulled down in 1852.

[To face page 6.]

nature, and so possessed by the remembrance of majestic dreams, that in the ordinary sense he can scarcely be said to have had any childhood—his mind, as it were, unfolding into flower without the gradual initiatory process of budding. In one of his less known papers he says :—

“Living in the country, I was naturally first laid hold of by rural appearances or incidents. The very earliest feelings that I recall of a powerful character were connected with some clusters of crocuses in the garden. Next, I felt the passion of grief in a profound degree, for the death of a beautiful bird, a kingfisher, which had been taken up in the garden with a fractured wing. That occurred before I was two years of age. Next, I felt no grief at all, but awe the most enduring, and a dawning sense of the infinite, which brooded over me, more or less, after that time.”

In his “Autobiographic Sketches” he thus draws his own inference from this and other circumstances of that period :—

“The earliest incidents in my life, which left stings in my memory so as to be remembered at this day, were two, and both before I could have completed my second year; namely, first, a remarkable dream of terrific grandeur about a favourite nurse, which is interesting to myself for this reason—that it demonstrates my dreaming tendencies to have been constitutional and not dependent upon laudanum; and, secondly, the fact of having connected a profound sense of pathos with the reappearance, very early in the spring, of some crocuses. This I mention as inexplicable: for such annual resurrection of plants and flowers affect us only as memorials, or suggestions of some higher change, and therefore in connection with the idea of death; yet of death I could, at that time, have had no experience whatever.”

About the same time the death of his sister Jane left a still more profound impression on his mind, complicated as the circumstances were by elements of a wholly new character. These resulted from the fact that a few days before the child's death there had been some whispering

amongst the other servants and the children of cruelty done to her by a nurse. Though it never reached the mother's ear, it left a deep impression on the boy's mind, which may be noted as the cause of his first awakening to the sense of the strife and evil of the world, and to a consciousness of constitutional horror of violence. He says :—

“I did not often see the person charged with this cruelty ; but when I did my eyes sought the ground ; nor could I have borne to look in her face ; not, however, in any spirit that could be called anger. The feeling which fell upon me was a shuddering horror, as upon a first glimpse of the truth that I was in a world of evil and strife.”

Whatever deductions different minds may feel inclined to make with regard to these reports of childish experiences, it is abundantly clear that we have to do with a premature and wholly abnormal development. As yet De Quincey himself does not claim that the idea of death, as separation and absolute removal, had revealed itself to him. “I knew little more of mortality than that Jane had disappeared. She had gone away ; but perhaps she would come back. Happy interval of heaven-born ignorance ! Gracious immunity of infancy from sorrow disproportioned to its strength ! I was sad for Jane's absence. But still in my heart I trusted that she would come again. Summer and winter came again—crocuses and roses ; why not little Jane ? ”

When a little over two years old he was seized by an ague which persistently clung to him till the end of his fourth year. During this period of affliction his mother assiduously attended to him and read to him, and it was towards the end of this illness that a memorable association was begun. His mother was then visited by a Miss Watson, a daughter of General Watson, that friend who afterwards became Lady Carbery, and who figures so radiantly in De Quincey's later Recollections. The girl was so attracted by the quaint and premature ways of the child, that, though De Quincey speaks of her as having found in him a “doll that could talk,” we may well

believe that a sensitive, well-educated young girl might very easily have felt a more intelligent interest in his odd and unchildlike speeches. We find elsewhere a very characteristic memory of his emergence from this plague of ague:—

“I remember even yet, as a personal experience, that when first arrayed, at four years old, in nankeen trousers, though still so far retaining hermaphrodite relations of dress as to wear a petticoat above my trousers, all my female friends (because they pitied me, as one that had suffered from years of ague) filled my pockets with half-crowns, of which I can render no account at this day.”

But the death of a second sister, Elizabeth, while he was still in his sixth year, awakened in him fully the sense of the ineffable mystery of death. She was about nine. “Perhaps,” he says, “the natural precedency in authority of years, united to the tender humility with which she declined to assert it, had been among the fascinations of her presence.” Her death left his existence empty, dark, like a world without a sun; and he does not hesitate to say that his sad and strange experiences at that stage of childhood projected themselves, in their effects, far into his later years. “For thou, dear noble Elizabeth, around whose ample brow, as often as thy sweet countenance rises upon the darkness, I fancy a *tiara* of light, or a gleaming *aureola* in token of thy premature intellectual grandeur,—thou whose head, for its superb developments, was the astonishment of science,—thou next, but after an interval of happy years, thou also wert summoned away from our nursery; and the night, which for me gathered upon that event, ran after my steps far into life; and perhaps at this day I resemble little for good or for ill that which else I should have been. Pillar of fire, that didst go before me to guide and to quicken,—pillar of darkness, when thy countenance was turned away to God, that didst too truly reveal to my dawning fears the secret shadow of death,—by what mysterious gravitation was it that my heart was drawn to thine?”

While she lay a corpse he stole secretly to her chamber, knelt by her side, and in mute farewell kissed the cold lips in a passion of grief. The majesty of the English funeral service and all the attendant circumstances mingled themselves with his impressions at the bedside of the dead. And whilst he was yet "obstinately tormenting the blue depths with his scrutiny, searching them for one angelic face that might perhaps have permission to reveal itself for a moment," he was anew called to confront the image of death. His father, who had for years been absent in France, in Lisbon, in Cintra, in Madeira, in the West Indies, in the hope of relief from consumption, at length came home to die. Very graphic is his record of the anxious waiting at Greenhay for the sound of the carriage bringing the invalid. His whole attitude—his clear perception of the practical bearings of the case, his meditative melancholy—belongs rather to the man who has suffered, yet has lost nothing of his original sensibility and tenderness, than to a child of seven.

It is worthy of notice too, that, in his "Confessions," the solemn pomp of the funeral service, now again heard, fixed itself indelibly in his mind, concurring, as he says, with all his previous feelings.

Not unnaturally he now more than ever strove to find some small means of escape from his own misery in books; but, unfortunately, his father's library afforded little that helped him. While dwelling on this circumstance in one of his less known writings, he gives us a little glimpse into the mode of thought and feeling that had obtained at Greenhay:—

"Cowper was the poet whom they generally most valued; Dr. Johnson, who had just ceased to be a living author, was looked up to with great reverence and interest upon various mixed feelings; partly for his courage, for his sturdy and uncomplying morality, according to his views, and his general love of truth. Too little attention was paid to music, and a disproportionate reverence to erudition. Not having the advantage of a college education themselves, my father and his class

looked up with too much admiration to those who had ; ascribing to them, with a natural modesty, a superiority greatly beyond the fact ; and not allowing themselves to see that business and the practice of life had given to themselves countervailing advantages, nor discerning that too often the scholar had become dull and comatose over his books ; whilst the activity of trade, and the strife of practical business, had sharpened their own judgments, set an edge upon their understandings, and increased the mobility of their general powers."

Notwithstanding the aspect of stateliness in the life at Greenhay, the children were treated with a Spartan-like simplicity in diet and other things ; faring, indeed, as De Quincey says, less sumptuously than the servants—a matter for which he significantly expresses gratitude. He deliberately records it as cause for thankfulness, also, that he passed his childhood in a rural solitude, and that his "infant feelings were moulded by the gentlest of sisters, and not by horrid pugilistic brothers." This he might not have been able to record so unqualifiedly, if his elder brother, who was strong and active, had not been much with his father abroad, and more recently at a public school. He very soon after this brought a new element of strife and fear into De Quincey's life. Meantime deep peace fell for a space on the family at Greenhay, while the shadows of grief and loss rested upon it. The first raising of the curtain which was to introduce him to the great world was not far distant, for the question of a school was discussed, and with such discussions may it not be said that the outward signs of childhood have passed ?

The outward circumstances of the family were hardly equal to the position in which they had lived. In spite of the father's success, his lengthened illness, and his early death in his thirty-ninth year, are reasons sufficient why, notwithstanding the aspect of luxury and elegance that obtained at Greenhay, the whole estate left amounted only to £1600 a year—the allowance to each of the boys being £150, and to each of the girls £100.



CHAPTER II.

SCHOOLS.

ROUGH was his awakening from the luxury of dreams in which hitherto he had found his solace. No sooner were the boys relieved from the restraints imposed by a period of mourning, than the elder brother, an adventurous and haughty boy, with no love of books or of gentle pleasures, began to lord it over his fragile companion. This boy, after returning from a period of residence at Lisbon with his father, had been for some time at the Grammar School at Louth in Lincolnshire; and, having passed through the ordeal to which boys were then exposed at public schools, he was not disinclined to practise what he had learned, in all probability, not without a measure of pain. His contempt for his shy and delicate companion was soon awakened on perceiving how he shrank from the calls made upon him to aid in rough escapades. His scorn was freely expressed, even whilst the younger was struggling, against all his deeper feelings, to obey his behests. "The Pillars of Hercules," says De Quincey, humorously, "upon which rested the vast edifice of his scorn, were these two—1st, my physics; he denounced me for effeminacy: 2d, he assumed, and even postulated as a *datum*, which I myself could never have the face to refuse, my general idiocy. Physically, therefore, and intellectually, he looked upon me as below notice; but,

morally, he assured me that he would give me a written character of the very best description, whenever I chose to apply for it."

All De Quincey's sufferings were intensified when, shortly after his father's death, the boys were sent daily to study classics under the Rev. Samuel Hall, one of their guardians, in Salford, within a mile of Greenhay. The coming and going became continuous scenes of feud. The elder brother picked a quarrel with the factory-boys, and a campaign was persistently carried on. De Quincey was compelled to help his brother under terror of being punished and giped at; and he lived in a fever of fear. The account of this period is brightened by the play of that quaint humour which De Quincey could so well throw over such reminiscences.

Among his papers we have found not a few references to this period, and to circumstances connected with it. He is fond of figuring their contests with the factory-boys under the phantasy of regular warfare, and writes in one place :—

"Because of this good disposition on my part, my promotion went forward rapidly; and I am sure it will give the reader satisfaction to hear that precisely on my eighth birthday I was raised to the rank of major-general. And by merit, observe—pure merit. What else could it be? For interest or irregular influence, by means of back-stairs or front-stairs, I never had. The particular merit which I had consisted in absolute docility. What I was told to do I did, never presuming to murmur or to argue, or so much as to think about the nature of my orders. Doubtless, and willingly I allow it, if those orders were to run away, I obeyed them more cheerfully."

And he thus carries out the phantasy by picturing a visit from his tutor :—

"My reverend guardian had always been free of the house at Greenhay—free to come, and free to go, without question asked or limits prescribed to his visits. Nobody was more respected in the house; and sometimes, but not very often, he used this licence. Had he

happened to walk over upon a night when I was desired to consider myself under arrest, and had been told of my exceeding depression, he would have come up to my bedside; in which case the following dialogue must to a certainty have taken place between us; so certainly, that I request the reader to consider me as reporting rather what was than what merely might have been:—

“‘*Guardian*—What is this I hear, child? What are you fretting about?’

“‘*I*—Because I’m under arrest.’

“‘*Guard.*—Arrest! Nonsense! Who could put *you* under arrest? A child like *you*? Who was it?’

“‘*I*—The commander-in-chief.’

“‘*Guard.*—Oh dear! this is very sad. My poor child, I’m afraid you’re very ill indeed. The commander-in-chief, do you say? And pray, now, if it’s no secret, what for?’

“‘*I*—Oh, because he says that I didn’t charge the left wing of the enemy with sufficient pluck.’

“‘*Guard.* (*after musing for some time*)—Well, now, my poor dear child, is *that* true? Does His Royal Highness the commander-in-chief say truly when he charges you with this breach of duty?’

“‘*I* (*rising up energetically in bed*)—No, sir; he does not. I did my best.’

“‘*Guard.*—Well, that’s right; nobody can do more.’

“‘*I*—But he’s never content; he’——

“‘*Guard.*—Who? the commander-in-chief?’

“‘*I*—Yes, sir, the commander-in-chief. I am but a major-general myself. However’——

“‘*Guard.*—Oh! you are a major-general, are you?’

“‘*I*—Yes, sir, nothing more; and the case is, that the commander-in-chief’——

“‘*Guard.*—Charged you with *not* charging the enemy. He charges *you*, but you didn’t charge the enemy.’

“‘*I*—Oh no, if you please; he knew very well that I charged them; but he said that I did not charge *home*.’

“‘*Guard.*—Well, now, my opinion is, that you behaved well enough if you charged at all. And supposing

that I should write to the Horse Guards upon this painful subject, I shall say as much ; in which case I think that the arrest will be taken off. In the meantime, as it seems to disturb your rest, perhaps you had better take a little medicine. But first I will go and consult your mother.”

On one or two occasions the poor boy actually fell into the hands of the enemy ; and on these occasions his treatment was a surprise.

“In my former captures,” he says, writing of a memorable third one, “there had been nothing special or worthy of commemoration in the circumstances. Neither was there in this third, excepting that, by accident, in the second stage of the case, I was delivered over to the custody of young women and girls ; whereas the ordinary course would have thrown me upon the vigilant attention (relieved from monotony by the experimental kicks) of boys. So far the change was very much for the better. I had a feeling myself, on first being presented to my new young mistresses, of a distressing sort. Having always, up to the completion of my sixth year, been a privileged pet, and almost, I might say, ranking among the sanctities of the household, with all its female sections, whether young or old (an advantage which I owed originally to a long illness, an ague, stretching over two entire years of my infancy), naturally I had learned to appreciate the indulgent tenderness of women ; and my heart thrilled with love and gratitude, as often as they took me up into their arms and kissed me. Here it would have been as everywhere else ; but, unfortunately, my introduction to these young women was in the very worst of characters. I had been taken in arms—in arms against their own brothers, cousins, sweethearts, and on pretexts too frivolous to mention.”

Terrors and manifold dim anticipations of punishment were passing through his brain, he says, “when suddenly one young woman snatched me up in her arms and kissed me ; from *her*, I was passed round to others of the party, who all in turn caressed me, with no

allusion to that warlike mission, against them and theirs, which only had procured me the honour of an introduction to themselves in the character of captive. The too palpable fact that I was not the person meant by nature to exterminate their families, or to make wildernesses, and call them pacifications, had withdrawn from their minds the counter-fact—that, whatever had been my performances, my intentions had been hostile, and that in such a character only I could have become their prisoner. Not only did these young people kiss me, but I (seeing no military reason against it) kissed *them*. Really, if young women will insist on kissing major-generals, they must expect that the generals will retaliate. One only in the crowd adverted to the character in which I came before them : to be a lawful prisoner, it struck her too logical mind that I must have been caught in some aggressive practices. ‘Think,’ she said, ‘of this little dog fighting, and fighting our Jack.’ ‘But,’ said another, in a propitiatory tone, ‘perhaps he’ll not do so any more.’ I was touched by the kindness of her suggestion, and the sweet, merciful sound of that same ‘*Not do so any more.*’” It may be, indeed, that the arrest of which we have found such careful record may have been the punishment for this unsoldierly yielding to the caresses of the enemy.

De Quincey, as the reader is hardly prepared to find, attributes to these rough experiences some markedly compensatory influences. “Well was it for me at this period, if well for me to live at all, that from any continued contemplation of my misery I was forced to wean myself, and suddenly to assume the harness of life. Else, under the morbid languishing of grief, and of what the Romans call *desiderium* (the yearning too obstinate after one irrecoverable face), too probably I should have pined away into an early grave. Harsh was my awaking ; but the rough febrifuge which this awaking administered, broke the strength of my sickly reveries through a period of more than two years ; by which time, under the natural expansion of my bodily strength, the danger had passed over.”

This brother, William,—to whom De Quincey so ungrudgingly attributes a good influence on his own fate,—was in every way a boy of remarkable character and energy. Though he disliked study, he could make use of books. He was incessantly writing and inventing, and invariably assumed towards the others the attitude of a teacher or master. He read lectures on physics in the nursery, and tried to construct an apparatus for walking across the ceiling like a fly, first on the principle of skates, and afterwards on that of a humming-top. He made balloons; he acted tragedies full of imaginary horrors, and drew pictures that frightened his sisters and the servants. He was fond of ghostly stories, and of speculating on possibilities in connection with them,—as, for instance, whether it were not possible that a confederation of all the ghosts might not defeat the whole living generation of men—thus anticipating fancies that have been worked into effective fictions, especially by Mrs. Oliphant, and indicating a spiritual or speculative vein wholly exceptional as associated with such practical force. The two brothers installed themselves as governors of imaginary kingdoms—that of the younger being always, on some pretext, invaded by the neighbouring potentate; and there is an odd but characteristic incident, due to Lord Monboddo's theory, which, doubtless, would have made his Lordship laugh, but which was very gravely real and earnest to one of the persons concerned. In truth, the whole character of the young family is marked by precocity the most complete, suggesting how far the hereditary taint is to be credited with so exceptional a development. De Quincey afterwards had no doubt of hereditary taint in his own case, speaking plainly of his symptoms in youth—hectic complexion, nocturnal perspiration, difficult breathing, and other signs of phthisis. These, as we shall see, he considered were afterwards arrested by his recourse to opium; though, as will be seen from the Appendix, Dr. Eatwell attributes some share of counter-acting influence to the ague from which he suffered.

William, amongst his other gifts, showed a genius for

drawing; and when the house at Greenhay was broken up, he was parted from his brother, and apprenticed, with premium, to Mr. de Louthembourg, then a well-known Academician. He died in London, of typhus, in his sixteenth year.

Thomas's progress at Salford had been remarkable, especially in Latin, in which his tutor, as he himself tells us, was an expert scholar. The Rev. Samuel Hall was evidently a man in advance of his time; broad in his theological views and with enlarged sympathies, though lacking in the energy and resource that command and sustain influence. Mr. Bradley, one of the gentlemen who bore part in the discussion about the birthplace, gives some glimpses of him:—"The friendship existing between the curate and De Quincey's father was evidently as strong as it was lasting. De Quincey's father had literary tastes, and the two leading literary lights in Manchester then were Samuel Hall of St. Ann's, and Dr. Barnes of Cross Street Chapel. The two were inseparable, and the minutes and papers of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, founded in 1781 by their exertions, bear testimony to this. Mr. Hall was an extremely broad Churchman, and lost his fellowship at the Collegiate Church owing to his repugnance to the Athanasian Creed. Any fresh biographer of De Quincey must bear these facts in mind, for the bias of such a guardian as Mr. Hall on De Quincey's education could not but have been strong. The curate's views, at least, are developed in De Quincey's writings."

De Quincey himself, though he does Mr. Hall full credit for his great attainments in Latin, writes of him as a feeble Grecian, as "sedentary and indolent," and in the autobiographic chapter on "The Female Infidel," speaks of him, when pitted in argument against the redoubtable Mrs. Lee, as "dreadfully commonplace, dull, dreadfully dull, and by the necessity of his nature, incapable of being in deadly earnest, which his splendid antagonist at all times was."

It was probably on account of the boy's proficiency in Latin that, in his eleventh year, it was arranged he

should enter the Bath Grammar School, then under Mr. Morgan, an accomplished Etonian. His mother had already removed to Bath. He accordingly went to the Bath school, along with a brother younger than himself by four years, of whom he has given us some charming glimpses. This was a child of beauty almost feminine, and of very winning disposition—so much so, that the attentions paid to him were apt to become troublesome. “For two years,” says De Quincey, “this continued—a subject of irritation the keenest on one side, and of laughter on the other, between my brother and his uglier schoolfellows, myself being among the number.” All readers of De Quincey’s “Autobiographic Sketches” will remember the many references to “Pink,” the pain of the parting of the brothers as they afterwards proceeded to different schools, and the shadow of disaster that fell upon “Pink’s” young life.

We are fortunately able to give a specimen or two of De Quincey’s schoolboy letters. The following was written to his sister Mary, who was then at school in Bristol, and shows that thus early his fancifulness and fun had begun to assert themselves. He playfully signs himself, as will be noticed, “Tabitha,” on which some jokes are founded:—

“BATH, GREEN PARK BUILDINGS EAST, No. 6,
Tuesday Morning, March 12th, 1799.

“MY DEAR SISTER,—Once more after a long campaign—after ‘*Bella, horrida bella*’—I return to the arts of peace. Don’t you think this a fine metaphor? Well, I suppose you would like to hear how this war first broke out? This day six weeks, as we were up saying, Mr. M. was called out, and so forsooth *little*, or rather *big Mounseer* Collins must jump into the desk. It happened that little Harman Minor wanted his hat, which hung up over Collins’s head. Wilbraham asked for the cane to reach it him, which Coll. refused, and at the same time, to give a little strength (I suppose) to his refusal, and to enforce his authority as a *master*,

endeavoured to hit him on the shoulder (as *he* says); but how shall I relate the sequel? On poor Ego did it fall. Say, Muse, what could inspire the cane with such a direful purpose? But not on my shoulder, on my *pate* it fell—unhappy *pate*! worthy of a better fate! Do you see that *pate* and *fate* rhyme, ay? However, I went on with my lesson when Mr. M. returned. As soon as I came home my mother sent for Mr. Grant; about three o'clock he came. I was then shaved on the place, and bled with six leeches; and two of the old jockies were so fond of my head that they staid on for three hours, and would not have departed even then, had not Mr. Grant (who came again at nine o'clock) flogged them off with some salt. Next morning I was bled again by the same number. For three weeks I neither read, nor wrote, nor talked, nor eat meat, nor went out of the back drawing-room, except when I went to bed. In the fourth week I read for a *quarter-of-an-hour per day*! and eat a little bit of meat; but I did not write. I now do everything as I used to do, except dancing, running, drinking wine. I am not to go to school till Easter.

“My mother wishes to know whether onny of the *little Innocents* are coming to Bath; because she would wish you to come with them. I should suppose old Madam Richardson or Ingleby, or some of those old jockies, will come, and then you might take a Saturday-afternoon coach and come to tea; so write as early as you can. I believe you will be in time for Mademoiselle's ball, which was put off (as I suppose) on my account.

“I was introduced last Thursday night to young Lord Westport (Lord Altamont's only child), and on Sunday I dined with him at his house at Lansdown. He is a very nice boy, about my size. My mother will call upon Mr. and Mrs. Grace (*N.B.* Mr. Grace is his tutor), and invite them and Lord W. to our house, where I shall have the opportunity of introducing him to you. Dr. Mapleton and Mr. Grant have left off coming to visit me. My mother desires her love to you. Mrs. Pratt continues to grow better; she has no complaint, but is still unable to walk even upstairs without help. She goes out every

day in a chair. *N.B.* They have a gang of robbers in Manchester. Mr. Kelsall's warehouse was attempted, but John C. called the watchmen, who drove them off. Some of the new books are come—viz., 'Asiatic Researches' (Sir William Jones' work), Goldsmith's *Histories of Greece and England*, Milner's 'Ecclesiastical History,' 'Rambler,' Hoole's 'Orlando Furioso,' Hoole's 'Tasso,' Venn's 'Duty of Man,' Ogden's 'Sermons,' &c.—Believe me, your affectionate sister,

"TABITHA QUINCEY."

His passion for books—of which he had begun to make a collection—had even at this early stage brought a shadowy sorrow into De Quincey's boy-life. He exceeded his liberal allowance of pocket-money, and ran in debt to the extent of some three guineas; and as he was ashamed to tell any of his friends or to ask their help, his trouble of conscience and his grief became excessive. Not improbably this circumstance, in conjunction with his natural dislike of being made an object of show, sufficed to render him little pleased with the plaudits which were showered upon him at the Bath Grammar School. He soon reached the *acme* of distinction. The master paraded his Latin verses before the older boys. They, however, were moved rather to hatred and envy than to emulation. In one or two instances he was reproached and insulted by them. They tried by every means to fasten quarrels on him. He, all this time, was pining for a sympathy that seemed inaccessible, and he thus indicates his feelings at that period:—

"Yet, for a word spoken in kindness, how readily I would have resigned (had it been altogether at my own choice to do so) the peacock's feather in my cap as the merest of baubles. Undoubtedly, praise sounded sweet in my ears also; but that was nothing by comparison with what stood on the other side. I detested distinctions that were connected with mortifications to others; and, even if I could have got over *that*, the eternal feud fretted and tormented my nature. The contest was

terminated for me by my removal from the school, in consequence of a very alarming illness threatening my head ; but it lasted more than a year, and it did not close before several among my public enemies had become my private friends."

At Bath, too, it was that De Quincey developed his passion for Greek, soon acquiring great mastery in it. His former tutor had given all the preference to Latin, and when he first went to Bath, the older boys, who were directed to his Latin verses as to models, had the advantage over him in the freedom with which they could handle the choral parts of Greek plays ; but, taken with the love of Greek, his remarkable memory and his tact for languages stood him in good stead. "At thirteen I wrote Greek with ease," he says, "and at fifteen my command of that language was so great, that I not only composed Greek verses in lyric metres, but could converse in Greek fluently, and without embarrassment—an accomplishment which I have not since met with in any scholar of my times, and which, in my case, was owing to the practice of daily reading off the newspapers into the best Greek I could furnish *extempore* ; for the necessity of ransacking my memory and invention, for all sorts and combinations of periphrastic expressions, as equivalents for modern ideas, images, relations of things, &c., gave me a compass of diction which would never have been called out by a dull translation of moral essays, &c. 'That boy,' said one of the masters, pointing the attention of a stranger to me, 'that boy could harangue an Athenian mob, better than you or I could address an English one.' He who honoured me with this eulogy was a scholar, 'and a ripe and good one : ' and of all my tutors, was the only one whom I loved or revered."

During the illness which had necessitated his removal from Bath his mother read to him, as she had done during his infantine sufferings from ague. It is very characteristic of his mother, as illustrating her austerity of character, that she was "shocked at my hearing compliments to my own merits, and was altogether disturbed at what doubtless the teachers had expected to

see received with maternal pride. She declined to let me return to the Bath school on my recovery, and [shortly afterwards] I went to another at Winkfield, in the county of Wilts, of which the chief recommendation lay in 'the religious character of the master.'" In this trait of De Quincey's mother, readers of recent biography will detect something not a little kindred to what frequently comes out in Lord Macaulay's treatment by his father in the earlier days. This type of severity would almost seem to be inseparable from certain forms of Evangelicalism—as if rigid and gloomy dogmas leave no openings for sympathetic expression in certain directions, but as certainly, account for it how we may, it has been a leading influence in framing noble characters.

It must have been some relief for the boy to indulge freely his fun and frolic in writing to his sister at Bristol. In one letter we find him thus excusing himself for delay in writing :—

"MY DEAR SISTER,—The tip of my nose is covered with confusion, my young toe blusheth and my old one is ashamed, when I consider my profound impudence in disobeying your commands. But, my dear, I have had very little time to write to you, considering that I have almost twenty-five boys' business to do every day.

"Next Tuesday being the 18th, I hope to see the tip of the Turkey carpet in our dining-room. On Monday night is the breaking-up supper. All Monday is a holiday (for which I care just as much as I do for the fourth tuck in Miss Ingleby's frock). We shall be in Bath by eleven o'clock. I believe Miss Spencer is coming with us to Bath; and Miss Christiana, Miss Betsey, and Amey are at Oxford. What beautiful paper! what charming writing!

"My mother (I meant to write it with a great M) has been here about a fortnight. Remember, when you write to me, child (which you mustn't do before the holidays), never to write the day of the month in figures, but at full length in what-d'ye-call-ums, for it's very

disrespectful to use contractions to your superiors.—
My dear, believe me, your ever-dutiful son and affectionate sister,

TABITHA QUINCEY.

“WINKFIELD, *June 11th.*”

De Quincey omits to mention, in the above-quoted passage, that for a short time after leaving the Bath Grammar School, and before proceeding to Winkfield, his mother kept him under her own eye, having engaged tutors for him and his brothers. One of these was a Frenchman, who had fled from his own country in the Reign of Terror, thankful to keep his head where it was originally placed. Of this Frenchman many stories were current among the members of the family at the time. One of these Miss de Quincey recalls, as having been told to her by her aunt, and it will no doubt have the effect of disturbing that conception of De Quincey's boyish character which is exhausted by the phrases “dreamy,” “brooding,” “visionary.” It shows him full of prank and boyish frolic:—

“My grandmother,” says Miss de Quincey, “was an attractive-looking and agreeable woman; and this Frenchman—a man of considerable rank and fortune—had a great business in looking after these unruly children, who were all the worse for finding out that he had wanted to marry their mother. Instead of doing their lessons, the two younger brothers and my father took seats at the window, and employed their time in making faces at an old lady who lived opposite. The poor French gentleman, utterly unable to teach or to keep order, was constantly to be heard crying, ‘Now, Monsieur Tomma, oh, do be persuaded! Oh, do be persuaded!’ The poor man wept over his troubles, but Monsieur Tomma would not be ‘persuaded.’ At length the old lady complained. My grandmother then represented the matter in its true light, and suddenly Monsieur Tomma was ‘persuaded’ to go over and apologise to the old lady, who was somewhat surprised to receive a call from the little wretch who had so annoyed her, but who made such a handsome apology that she asked him

to sit down, and he at once entered into conversation with her. She afterwards spoke of him to many people, saying that he was the cleverest and nicest little boy she ever saw. The tutor went back to France, but not as Monsieur Tomma's stepfather."

It is not impossible that there may lie a hidden reference to this brief boyish episode in the following sentence from the "Confessions:"—"At Bath, where the French emigrants mustered in great strength (six thousand, I have heard) during the three closing years of the last century, I, through my mother's acquaintance with several leading families amongst them, had gained a large experience of French caligraphy."

It was probably such inveterate unmanageableness under home supervision and French tutors, that caused Winkfield—whose "chief recommendation lay in 'the religious character of the master'"—to be thought of. Mr. Spencer was rector of Winkfield, and the school was a small one, with only twenty or thirty boys.

Another reason may, however, have weighed with De Quincey's mother. In spite of a return of good spirits, the boy continued at intervals to suffer much from pains in the head, attributed to the blow which he had received. A school in the country thus had the additional recommendation of being likely to promote his health, which threatened to be permanently impaired. But he was eminently companionable—anything but a moping or solitary boy. Certain letters which passed between one of his schoolfellows—the Rev. E. W. Grinfield, well known as a theologian and Biblical critic—and De Quincey's eldest daughter, Margaret—Mrs. Craig—in 1859-60, just after his death, furnish some reminiscences of him then.

"He came to Spencer's," wrote Mr. Grinfield, "because he had received a blow on the head from the usher of the Bath Grammar School, from the effects of which it was fancied that he still suffered; and he was attended by a physician, Dr. Mapleton from Bath.*

* It was from Dr. Mapleton, when he attended De Quincey for his head, that the latter learned the Ziph language, which he has

But I think the injury was purely imaginary, and that his pains arose from irritation in his too active and susceptible brain. I remember his great affection for his brother Richard, whom we called 'Pink,' because he was so handsome. I can remember their mother coming to Winkfield—a very clever lady, and intimate with Hannah More; but I recollect that your father said his mother was as clever as Hannah. We carried on a little weekly paper called 'The Observer,' for our own improvement in composition, and for the benefit and amusement of the Miss Spencers; and I remember well the interest De Quincey took in it, and the clever, funny things he wrote. I can even now recall some lines he composed in answer to a challenge from a neighbouring school:—

'Since Ames's skinny school has dared
To challenge Spencer's boys,
We thus to them bold answer give
To prove ourselves "no toys."

Full thirty hardy boys we are,
As brave as e'er was known;
We will nor threats nor dangers mind
To make you change your tone !'

"He was a great favourite with all the boys at Spencer's, and my younger brother, Tom, at Clifton, remembers how he assisted him in his lessons. He did not much like old Spencer, who was a very inferior scholar to his first tutor at Manchester and his teachers at Bath; but he was a special favourite with the Miss Spencers."

The younger brother Tom, referred to above, became rector of Clifton; and in a letter addressed by him to De Quincey in 1847, to which we shall find pathetic reference in one of De Quincey's letters to be given afterwards, we read:—

so humorously described in the "Autobiographic Sketches"—"the Nation of London."

“It is probable that the fine memory, which is sure to form an ingredient in such a mind as yours, may still enable you to recall from a long, long oblivion a certain quiet, tame, insignificant schoolfellow, by name *Tom Grinfield* (*not Edward*, his elder brother), whom you used occasionally to help in his *Virgil* lessons, as you sat with your back toward the schoolroom-door at the central table, near old *Spencer's* chair of hearing, at *Winkfield* school. It is now *near half-a-century* since the period to which I would fain recall your thoughts for some idle moments of listless reverie, and lowly respite from the excursions of genius. The memory of early days has an *unutterable* power over me, as over yourself, and the *greater* as I decline; and so, having some years ago paid a half-day's visit to the well-remembered scene just before the death of *Spencer's* son *Tom*, his successor in the rectory, I penned a few plain verses, which I will here transcribe, as just equivalent with so much truthful prose:—

‘What deep, sad yearnings in my bosom swelled
 As—*thrice ten* years elapsed—I once beheld,
 WINKFIELD, thy homely scene, so early known,
 The schoolroom, playground, silent now and lone!
 Myself how changed! a pensive pilgrim grey,
 Where oft the schoolboy rushed from task to play!
 ’Twas there, DE QUINCEY (not obscure the name,
 Linked with bright COLERIDGE, and with opium's fame),
 You kindly solved each question I might ask
 In VIRGIL's, OVID's loved though painful task.
 So fine your genius, and so bland your mood,
 Amidst a horde of savages so rude,
 A being of superior mould you seemed,
 And, like an angel, mixed with mortals, beamed.
 Tutored by *your* Homeric mind's command,
 We marched a *Grecian* and a *Trojan* band;
Achilles, *Ajax*, *Diomedes*, arrayed
 With spear and shield by Farmer *Hillman* made.
Ulysses marked *yourself*, the master-mind;
 While in your beauteous brother *Paris* shined.
 Old SPENCER's self approved the classic wile,
 And wreathed his solemn visage to a smile.
 When AMES's school had challenged SPENCER's boys,
 Still rings in memory's ear the applauding noise

That hailed *your* bold response,* rehearsed aloud
 From the school-table to the stripling crowd,
 Hurling 'retorted scorn' in martial numbers proud.
 The prize proposed to schools, and well bestowed
 On *your* neat version of *Horatian* ode,†
 For little WINKFIELD won unlooked-for fame,
 And blazoned at fourteen DE QUINCEY's name.

Oh, magic spell upon our latest age
 Cast by the scene where childhood conned his page !
 How have I felt thee in my waning day,
 After long, changeful years had passed away,
 Retracing early haunts at WINKFIELD and PAUL'S CRAY !
 As though the spirit of my youth once more
 Had met me where it left so long before.

T. G. *February 26th, 1846.* "

Our readers will perhaps pardon the enthusiastic effusiveness of these lines, as they will suffice to show the lasting impression De Quincey made on his school companions—an impression of a gentle and studious, but still a truly boyish and energetic character—not standing coldly apart, but entering readily into sports and pastimes, and eager to aid and to do a kindness.

* "Your response began—'Since AMES's skinny school has dared to challenge SPENCER's boys,' &c. Your own favourite stanza began—'Haply you chance to meet our little band so brave.'"

† "'Integer vitæ,' &c. You began—'Fuscus, the man whose heart is pure,' &c."





CHAPTER III.

TOUR IN IRELAND.

AT Winkfield, De Quincey remained only a little over a year. He left it to go to Eton to join his friend Lord Westport, son of the Irish Earl of Altamont, as we have seen, and grandson, on the mother's side, to the celebrated Lord Howe, for a tour in Ireland. He tells us that he owed his friendship with Lord Westport to the fact that his father's commercial relations often took him to Ireland, where he had many friends. It was at the house of one of these, in the west, that De Quincey says he first met Lord Westport. A letter we have already given (p. 20) proves that it was near Bath. Thus it is clear that the fact of De Quincey's father having been at one time engaged in retail trade did not shut him out from access to the very best society. We learn, too, from the "Autobiographic Sketches," that De Quincey's first visit to Oxford was paid in the company of Lord Westport when both "were children." But this has to be taken *cum grano salis*; for De Quincey was fourteen when he was first introduced to Lord Westport. De Quincey has himself told fully all the incidents of that Irish journey—how he had audience of George III. at Frogmore; how he first saw the city—"No, not the city, but the nation"—of London; and then, how for a period of months he enjoyed the amenities of high life among the Irish

nobility; and how in Ireland he first fell under the spell of the tender passion. The object of it was Miss Blake, an Irish lady of education and rank, sister to the Dowager-Countess of Errol, whom he met on a canal-boat, and who by the most delicate use of her powers of conversation saved him from the vulgar references of some tuft-hunters on board, who were inclined to show deference to Lord Westport by an insinuated disrespect for his companion—whom they had discovered by accident to be a person of no expectations, just as they had discovered that he was a nobleman and wealthy. Miss Blake threw her *ægis* over him; and afterwards, when matters of literary interest were discussed, we can well believe that she felt De Quincey amply repaid her for the effort she had put forth to shield him from taunt and insult.

In a series of letters, which exhibit quick observation and capacity to profit by new surroundings, as well as power of style already formed, we have a detailed account of his experiences during this Irish tour. We shall give a few specimens of them, though they are but schoolboy letters. In a note, dated July 2nd, 1800, Mr. Grace, Lord Westport's tutor, writes to him in these terms:—

“Your acceptance of Westport's invitation gives me the greatest pleasure, and I have little doubt but you will be gratified by the excursion in whatever objects you have in view. To a mind anxious for information, and capable of receiving it, there are few things which may not become a source; and I should hope on this occasion there will be found many occurrences for an inquiring and strong mind to improve upon. I am very happy that you have such a desire to visit Ireland; you will travel through a great part of it, quite across the kingdom, but not the best part of it. I hope your conclusions in favour of England when compared with it, may not be too much to its disadvantage. Every country has its peculiar modes and habits, and those things which may at first view appear quite absurd and ridiculous, will often, upon more accurate examination,

be found the wise results of experience ; but I am sure your good sense will teach you to *distinguish*."

They accordingly set out on the 18th July ; and De Quincey thus gives his impression of some of the interesting points in the journey to Holyhead in a note to his mother :—

"The journey (as far as relates to the places we passed through) was extremely pleasant. At Stratford-on-Avon I visited the house in which Shakespeare was born. I had not time to go and see his grave, which was three-quarters of a mile off. The road through Wales was much finer than anything I have ever seen or ever expected to see. From Oswestry to Llangollen was the first remarkably beautiful stage. If you went that road any time when you were in Wales, you will probably remember that we travel on the side of a mountain looking down into an immensely deep valley surrounded by

‘Mountains and rocks which rise
In rugged grandeur to the skies.’

The sun was then setting, and the effect of his glowing light on the woods, the winding river, and the cattle below, and on the distant mountains, and gigantic rocks above, was far more beautiful in the former, and sublime in the latter, than I am able to describe. The road from Llangollen to Corwen, I am told, is still more delightful ; but, as we travelled that stage between nine and twelve o'clock, I saw very little of it. At first, indeed, the dusky hills, seen 'through the horizontal misty air,' were mournful, but in a short time the increasing twilight prevented me from having any but a very indistinct view of the fine scenes we were passing through. Of all the stages, however, that we travelled, none, in my opinion, was equal to the one between Aberconway and Bangor. It is seventeen miles in length (reckoning to the ferry), and nearly the whole way by vast rocks. Part of the road lies over Pen-Man-Mawr, and for more than ten miles I suppose we ride in sight of the sea. But I am afraid I am 'teaching my

grandmother (my mother at least) to suck eggs,' in talking of places which I dare say you have been over many times, and therefore know much better than I. On Friday evening, Lord Westport came to me and desired me to go with him to the play. I tried to escape by saying that I had letters to write (which in fact I had); however, as he seemed much disappointed at not going on the last evening of his being near a playhouse, and as he declared he would not go without me, I consented at length to accompany him to the Windsor Theatre. But be assured, my dear mother, I would not have done this for all the world if I could have helped it, had I no other reason for avoiding public amusements than the earnest desire of obliging and obeying you.— Believe me, dear mother, your ever-affectionate son,

“T. DE QUINCEY.

“*July 22nd, Tuesday Morning, 1800.*”

He sketches in a very lively way a drive from Dunleary to Dublin in a jingle, which he defines as a “rotten sociable drawn by one skeleton;” vividly describes the last sittings of the Irish House of Lords, at which he was present with his friends; and is able to assure his sister, that, “notwithstanding the dangerous places through which we are constantly riding, I have never yet been thrown.” The following is an account of an installation of the Knights of the Blue Ribbon—made all the more interesting to De Quincey and his friends in that Lord Altamont was one of those installed:—

“The installation was very grand. It was performed in St. Patrick's Cathedral. As the church is very small, there was not room for more than 250 spectators. The day was suffocatingly hot, and each of the six knights was arrayed (besides their usual clothes) in thirty-seven yards of blue satin lined with as many of white. Every knight had three esquires, who were dressed like himself, except that their robes were white lined with blue. There was another difference between the dresses of the knights and squires, that the hats of the first had six

fine feathers in them, white, red, and blue, while those of the latter had none. The music, I thought, was very fine, and far the best part of the exhibition. The organ is larger, I believe, than that at the Abbey, but has exactly the same tone; so much so, that when, at the entrance of the procession, the organist began the coronation anthem, I was actually startled, and was certain I had heard it before, though I could not exactly tell where. It gave me the same sensation as when one sees a person whom one formerly knew, but who is now so altered by time as to leave one in doubtful consideration who he is or when or where one saw him. 'God save the King' was performed by the band within, accompanied by the soldiers without, in the finest and most hair-making-to-stand-erect manner I ever heard. The whole business was concluded by Gettingen's *Te Deum*, which took about an hour in performing. The company were a little disturbed in the middle of the installation by the falling of the banners belonging to one of the knights; which, however, though they were erected at the altar, where the people were almost standing on one another's heads, yet, to the great surprise of every one present, did not the least injury to any man, any woman, or any child. . . . The crowd to see the procession was immense; and, indeed, it was very well worth seeing. It was so large, I know, that when it made its entrance into the church, as a lady who stood near me said, it *visibly* increased the heat. In the evening about ten o'clock, when I was just going to sleep, I was startled by very loud huzzaings before the door. They kept me awake for a couple of hours. This morning Lord Altamont tells me it was the mob, who had collected in Sackville Street, and made bonfires to congratulate him on having been made a Knight of the Most Noble Order of St. Patrick.

"Lord Altamont is a very fat man, and so lame that he is obliged to have two servants to support him whenever he stirs. He had formerly, Lord Westport tells me, a paralytic stroke. He is a very sensible man, I think, and one of the most loyal persons I know. He

abhors the very idea of gaming, and does not like to see a pack of cards. He will on no account permit Westport to play for money, and would be very angry if he saw him playing at all, though it were for nothing. He never swears, because he thinks it both a blackguard and a foolish practice. He always goes to church once on a Sunday, makes all the responses, seems very attentive, and loves to talk with me about the sermon as we are coming home from church. He does not conceive there is any harm in a clergyman's going to the play, and was quite astonished to hear from Westport that Mr. Grace had never seen 'Blue Beard.'

"Lord Altamont's favourite study is 'agriculture.' He is member of a farming society here, and is continually introducing the English methods and customs in Mayo, nearly the whole of which he possesses. He has at different times brought over large flocks of the finest English breeds, and has persuaded some Devonshire gentlemen to come and live at Westport, in order to teach the people there the English manner of farming. He is very good-natured and polite, but despises fashion, seldom goes out to dinner anywhere, but has constantly half-a-dozen or a dozen of his particular friends and relations to dine and drink tea with him. He is very temperate, and is excessively cheerful, and sometimes quite gay in the evening. I am now reading 'Park's Travels' and 'Mallet du Pan.' The former I am just finishing, but of 'Mallet du Pan' I have only read the three first numbers, containing the 'History of the Destruction of the Helvetic League and Liberty.' However, what I *have* read, I have read with great attention, and am abridging it, as I do most books with which I am much pleased. Rasselas has been my bosom friend ever since I left Bath. Lord A. lent me another book, which, I dare say, you have read: 'History of the Campaigns of 1796 in Germany and Italy.' I read it with the maps, and by that means got a pretty accurate knowledge of the geography of those countries. As Largeaux is constantly talking French to us, I am considerably

improved, I think, in that language, and am able to speak it with great ease. I have two Greek books here, so that I am advancing in it, and by teaching Lord Westport every day to make verses, I keep up my Latin.

“On Friday and Saturday, August 1st and 2nd, I went to the House of Lords. On Friday I heard the Union Act passed, and on Saturday the election of the twenty-eight peers who are to be returned to the English Parliament. Lord Altamont is one of them.”

A further letter gives some interesting glimpses, and shows, we think, a remarkable variety of interests for a boy of fifteen.

“WESTPORT, *Wednesday, August 20th, 1800.*

“DEAR AND HONOURED MOTHER,—About five o'clock on Wednesday morning (August 13th), we set off in the canal-boat which goes from Dublin to Tullamore. This is a very pleasant mode of conveyance, and something like that on the canal from Manchester to Runcorn. But it is rather slow, as you may judge from our not reaching Tullamore (which is only forty-five and a half miles *Irish*), until eight o'clock in the evening. After waiting nearly an hour in the boat, and not being able to procure any chaise to carry us on to the next stage, Lord Altamont determined to go to Lord Tullamore's seat, called Charleville, three miles from Tullamore. At length the Dean found a man who agreed to take us that night to Charleville. The chaise was almost breaking down, full of holes, and so small that I was obliged to sit on Lord Altamont's knee. The poor, lean, miserable, famished scarecrows who dragged us along were just come off a long stage, so that the driver was obliged to walk by their sides to hinder them from falling. This is a sample of the travelling accommodations on the road from Dublin to Westport. I saw nothing strikingly beautiful at Lord Tullamore's, either in the house or grounds. On Thursday we left Charleville at six in the

morning, and reached Clohans between nine and ten. Here we found Lord A.'s phaeton, which had been sent on from Dublin the Tuesday before, waiting for us with four horses. After we had breakfasted, it was agreed that Lord A., the Dean, and Westport should go in the phaeton, I and Largeaux follow in a post-chaise, and that after we had gone the first six miles, I and Westport should change places. We had hardly gone three, when the iron coating of one of the phaeton's wheels came off. After we had found a blacksmith's shop, Lord Altamont and Westport got into the chaise, the Dean rode on horseback, and Largeaux staid behind with the other servants to come on with the phaeton. In an hour and a half we reached Ballinasloe. Here there were no horses to be got. After resting an hour, the same horses who had brought us to Ballinasloe (twelve miles *Irish*) took us on to Milough, which is about sixteen Irish miles; so that the same pair of horses drew us about thirty-six English miles, which proves that though the *Irish* horses are not so well kept, they are capable of bearing as much labour as the *English*. Here we dined immediately (for we did not get in till past six), walked about a little, and then went to bed. The phaeton arrived about two hours after us. At Milough the Dean has a living, so that we left him there, and proceeded to Tuam. We reached this place at nine, and though we were now only two stages from Westport, yet Lord Altamont, fearing from the badness of the roads, want of horses, &c., that we might not get in till late in the evening, drove up to the Archbishop's palace, where we passed the whole day and night. The Archbishop's name is *Beresford*. In the evening there were at the Archbishop's a Mr. Murray and a Lord St. Lawrence. Lord Altamont, having read my translation of the Ode in Horace, desired me to show it to the company. The book, after a great deal of search, could not be found; but as I could say it by heart, I wrote it out, and Mr. Murray read it. They then desired me to translate for them another Ode at Westport, which I am going to do. The next morning Lord A. set off at six o'clock in order

to avoid being pressed by the Archbishop to stay another day. We breakfasted at Ballinasloe, where we found a chariot and horses waiting for us, and reached Westport about three o'clock in the afternoon (on Saturday, August 16th).

“Westport is a most delightful place. The house is very large and handsome. The finest room in it is fifty-seven feet and a half long. The only thing in which I am disappointed is the very one in which I was most certain I should be gratified—I mean the *library*. Even as to *quantity* it is inferior to ours in Bath; and as to *quality*, it is the worst I ever saw. Almost all the books are about *farriery* and *draining*, or *law reports* and old trials. However, I hear that the *French* and the *rebels*, who have twice been in possession of this house, have made off with the best books. There is a fine deer-park here, containing nearly 300 acres. Croagh Patrick, the highest mountain I believe in Ireland, is about six miles from us in a direct line; he is shaped like a sugar-loaf, and is generally *cloud-capt*. Lord Altamont thinks this mountain was formerly a volcano. To-morrow we go up to the top of it. We generally ride sixteen or seventeen miles a day, by which means we get to see almost everything worth seeing in this most romantic country. It was originally fixed that we should leave Westport on the 8th of September, exactly three weeks from Monday last; but of this I am not quite certain yet. Westport tells me that he shall ask his papa for a week more, as some *small* compensation for keeping him a day at the Archbishop of Tuam's, which, in the Eton phrase, he thought a *great bore*. It depends, however, principally I suppose, on the time when Lady Altamont can come over. Lady Howe, you have, I dare say, heard before this, is dead; and Lady A. is staying with her sister, Lady Viscountess Howe. Lord Altamont wishes to go over with us to fetch her to Westport, and she may probably want to come over in less or more than three weeks.

“As to the rebellion in Ireland, the English, I think, use the *amplifying*, and the Irish the *diminishing hyper-*

bole; the former view it with a *magnifying glass*, the latter with a *microscope*. In England, I remember, we heard such horrid accounts of murders, and battles, and robberies, and here everybody tells me the country *is* in as quiet a state as England, and *has* been so for some time past. What makes me suspect the truth of these smooth-tongued messengers is that the rebellion, even at its greatest height, they affect to treat with indifference, and speak of it as we should of a Birmingham riot. I know, in England, I used to hear people talking of it as of a *bloody civil war*, and the rebel troops were considered, *I* thought, a *formidable army*; whereas *here* they are termed *merely straggling banditti*, who unroofed a few cabins and took away *some* cattle. I often hear people making such remarks as these: 'And indeed the rebels were come into the town, and as I thought they *might probably be troublesome* if I staid, I therefore determined to ride off after breakfast; for *really* many persons of my acquaintance, *I do assure ee*, had their trunks taken away on the road.'

"Last Sunday (August 18th), I got your letter dated July 26th. I am very much obliged to you for it, my dear mother, and will endeavour to answer everything which requires an answer in it. *First*, as to *bathing*, I need only say, that, begging Dr. Mapleton's pardon, much care is not necessary in attending to his rules, for they contain rather a list of things which I am *not* to do, than of what I *am* to do. At any rate, they are such rules as I prescribed to myself, and have always observed since my first bathe in the *Thames*. As yet I have felt not the least inconvenience from it; on the contrary, I am always fresher and livelier after going into the water.

"*Secondly*, about *Frogmore*. I certainly *did* go there in my travelling dress, but then my travelling dress was a very good one (much better than what Lord Westport had on), and my boots were cleaned. Mr. Grace thought I was dressed quite well enough. Besides, I hardly saw five persons in the gardens, for the ball had begun then,

and the ballroom was so crowded that it was impossible for any person to see what I was dressed in.

"*Friday morning, August 22nd, 1800.*—Yesterday we ascended the famous Croagh Patrick. It is about two miles to the top (by the winding road), from which may be seen a great part of Connaught. When I was at the summit, I thought of Shakespeare looking 'abroad from some high cliff, and enjoying the elemental war.' Beneath us indeed was a most tremendous war of the elements, whilst we were as calm and serene as possible. To our left we saw all Clew Bay and the vast Atlantic. Going up and coming down took us about three hours and a half. All the way up on the side were piled stones in the form of little graves by the Roman Catholic priests. At the top is a circular wall, very rough and craggy, on which, at St. Patrick's Day, all the Papists, for many miles round, run on their knees (quite bare) till the skin is off.

"In the canal-boat was a Miss Blake, a sister of the present Countess-Dowager of Errol. She and I formed an acquaintance, and talked about the English poets for the whole afternoon. She said that Mr. Blake (her father) had agreed, at the request of Lady Errol, who is in raptures with Bath, to take a house there. Lady Errol, she said, had hitherto lodged in Milsom Street and Great Pulteney Street, but their house was to be in Queen's Square. She then desired me to call upon her when she came to Bath, which she supposed would be sometime in October. Lady Errol I have frequently seen wheeling about Bath. Miss Blake is very like her. I afterwards found from Lord Altamont that she is a friend of his.

"I have just received your letter of the 12th of August. Much as I wish to hear from you, my dear mother, I am sorry you should spend that time in writing to me which, I am sure, your health much requires to be spent in rest. I am much concerned to hear that Mrs. Schreiber still continues so ill. Give my very best love, if you please, to her, and my dear sister, Mary. Mary, I know, is a most superlative hyperexcellent nurse, and

I will write to her, if possible, by the next post. My remembrance, or compliments, or something of that sort, if you please, to Lord and Lady Carbery. I understood his Lordship was coming over immediately to Ireland.

“I meant to have written on Monday, but was prevented by various circumstances. On Wednesday I began this letter (for on Tuesday there is no post), but not having it finished by half after two o'clock, I was compelled to keep it until to-morrow (Saturday), for the post only goes on *Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays*. Lord Altamont has just told me that he means to be in Dublin by the 10th of September; so that most probably I shall be at home on the 15th. There is now but little time, you know, my dear mother, for seeking a school. To Eton I am sure you will not send me. As for any private school, if you knew what a dislike I have to them, how miserable I feel at the thought of going to one, you would not, I think, wish me. It is not for any particular inconveniences, which are *generally* met with at private schools, that I abhor them so much—it is for a fault, (at least in *my* eyes a *fault*) which cannot be remedied, which is essential to the very nature of the school. I mean its *being* private. Few private schools, I should think, are much superior, even in point of *learning*, to Mr. Spencer's. But the thing which makes me most unhappy at a private school is there being no emulation, no ambition, nothing to contend for—no honours to excite one. This was exactly the case at Mr. Spencer's. I was at the head of the school the whole time I was there. No one but myself could make verses, and all those kind of things; but then I had no one to contend with, nor anything higher to aspire to. The consequence was that my powers entirely flagged, my mind became quite dormant in comparison of what it was at the Bath Grammar School. I had no one to praise me, to spur me on, or to help me. Nobody (except the boys) knew I was at the top of the school. With them it was considered no merit to be the head-boy; and *had* it, I should have derived but

little pleasure from the applause of those who, with few exceptions, were nearly approaching to idiots. I was often pestered with such questions from the ladies, &c., as, 'Are you in the same class with little Emly' (a little boy of about twelve years old, *decidedly* the greatest blockhead I ever saw). In short, it *was*, and always *will* be, as impossible for me to exert myself as much at a private as in a public school, as it would be for a person running for his own amusement to go as quick as if he were running a race or flying from his pursuers. At a private school I have 'little to fear or hope from censure or from praise.' If, then, you let me go to *any* public school, what can be better than the Bath one? The plan pursued there every one allows to be incomparable. It is a very great improvement, I think, on the Eton method. If I had room, I would compare them together from what I have heard and observed at both places, and I am sure you would allow it. But of the *learning* it is useless to speak, since you yourself say it is just as you would wish it. If it is the *morals* you object to, are they not as good as at most places? Besides, my dear mother, you will remember that the only reason (as far as I know) for my not being now at the Grammar School was on account of the affair with Mrs. P——. It is now a year and a half since that happened. I do not pretend to defend it; but that was not occasioned, I think, by anything belonging to the Grammar School. It might have happened with equal ease at any other place; and I had not then been near the Grammar School for above two months. Surely *one* fault, and that, too, committed at a time when my brain was certainly disordered and my head injured by the blow I had received, will not for ever be urged as a reason for my not going to the only place where I can be happy, or from which I can derive any solid and lasting advantage. Believe me, my dear mother, if you knew my mind you would see how resolutely bent I am against anything which could give you uneasiness. Any promises you wish I am ready to make. In short, everything you desire me I will do, and only ask for that one

thing, to go to the Grammar School.—Believe me, my dear, very dear mother, your ever affectionate son,

“T. DE QUINCEY.

“FOR MRS. DE QUINCEY,

At Mrs. SCHREIBER'S,

Tixover,

Near Stamford, Lincolnshire,

OLD ENGLAND.”

It may be mentioned here once for all, in reference to the many remarks—some of them not very charitable—made about the “De” in the name, that De Quincey's mother, and not De Quincey, was the first to assume or to resume it, as the case may be; and this while he was still a child, as the letter above given would suffice to prove.

This is how, in more mature years, De Quincey estimated the effect on his mind and character of the new experience due to his meeting with Miss Blake—on which delicate point it will have been noticed that he is silent to his mother:—

“Never, until this hour, had I thought of women as objects of a possible interest, or of a reverential love. I had known them either in their infirmities and their unamiable aspects, or else in those sterner relations which made them objects of ungenial and uncompanionable feelings. Now first it struck me that life might owe half its attractions and all its graces to female companionship. Gazing, perhaps, with too earnest an admiration at this generous and spirited young daughter of Ireland, and in that way making her these acknowledgments for her goodness which I could not properly clothe in words, I was roused to a sense of my indecorum by seeing her suddenly blush. I believe that Miss Blake interpreted my admiration rightly; for she was not offended; but, on the contrary, for the rest of the day, when not attending to her sister, conversed almost exclusively, and in a confidential way, with Lord Westport and myself. The whole, in fact, of this conversation must have convinced her that I, a mere boy as I was

(viz., about fifteen), could not have presumed to direct my admiration to *her*, a fine young woman of twenty, in any other character than that of a generous champion, and a very adroit mistress in the dazzling fence of colloquial skirmish. My admiration had, in reality, been addressed to her moral qualities, her enthusiasm, her spirit, and her generosity. Yet that blush, evanescent as it was—the mere possibility that I, so very a child, should have called up the most transitory sense of bashfulness or confusion upon any female cheek, first—and suddenly as with a flash of lightning penetrating some utter darkness—illuminated to my own startled consciousness, never again to be obscured, the pure and powerful ideal of womanhood and womanly excellence. This was, in a proper sense, a *revelation*; it fixed a great era of change in my life; and this new-born idea, being agreeable to the uniform tendencies of my own nature—that is, lofty and aspiring—it governed my life with great power, and with most salutary effects. Ever after, throughout the period of youth, I was jealous of my own demeanour, reserved and awestruck in the presence of women; reverencing often, not so much *them*, as my own ideal of woman latent in them. For I carried about with me the idea, to which often I seemed to see an approximation, of

‘A perfect woman, nobly planned
To warn, to comfort, and command.’

And from this day I was an altered creature, never again relapsing into the careless irreflective mind of childhood.”

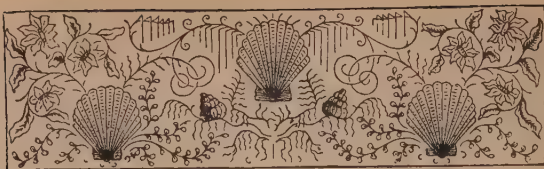
The key to the opening of this passage will only be found by a glance at the pervading atmosphere of his home. His mother was a woman of strong intellect, but her religious prepossessions had led her almost to a gloomy narrowness and austerity. In spite of great discernment and independence of character, she allowed herself to be influenced by the straitest of the sect that regarded Hannah More with feelings akin to idolatry. She prided herself in allowing no verge to sentiment in her relation

with others. The little reference to Mrs. P——, in the letter last quoted, would almost lead one to fancy that De Quincey must have been guilty of some “very injudicious” conduct. It was no more than a school-boy trick played on this lady,—such a trick as most persons would only have smiled at. Mrs. Baird Smith says:—“I am sure that in early manhood my father found that the most monotonous refinements, and perhaps the rigid pieties and orthodoxies, of his home created a sense of isolation, and by consequence reaction. His mother, in spite of her dogmatism, must have been a woman diffident of her own judgment, and finding herself left with a large family not all developing in strictly orthodox and orderly fashion, too apt to call in and prop herself up with outside advice and authority, against which the young men, in turn, revolted. My father and his elder sister thought, and, I believe, thought justly, that Mrs. P—— prejudiced his mother’s mind against them. She had not a little to do with the arbitrary dropping and taking up of the ‘De’ in the name, as signed in the earlier letters, as you must have noticed. She it was who urged on my grandmother that the use of the ‘De’ was a worldly vanity which she ought to lay aside. At this the young people were inclined to kick up their heels, but to very little purpose.”

On returning from the Irish tour, De Quincey parted from Lord Westport at Birmingham, and went on to Northamptonshire to pay a visit to Lady Carbery at Laxton. She was then passing into much the same dogmatic form of religious faith as his mother; but she was friendly to him as before, and as much inclined to benefit by his companionship. He was questioned by her about innumerable difficulties in Greek, encouraged to hunt up texts and present their true exegesis, while sometimes he would endeavour to interest her and her friends in the problems he was intently engaged on and the poetry he admired. He was declared by Lady Carbery to be her “Admirable Crichton,” a term of distinction, however, with which De Quincey was inclined to quarrel (somewhat to her amusement), as he held it

significant of a certain superficiality to which he did not aspire. Amongst other questions, this one presented itself in the course of their studies:—"Can the present English version of the Bible be safely accepted as a literal and unerring guide?" "No," said De Quincey; "not unless it be taken with the Greek version." These severer studies, however, did not prevent Lady Carbery from doing all she could to extend the range of his accomplishments. She was even anxious to interest him in manly exercises, and provided due tutorage for him. "As Lady Carbery," he writes, "did not forego her purpose of causing me to shine under every angle, it would have been ungrateful in me to refuse my co-operation with her plans, however little they might wear a face of promise. Accordingly, I surrendered myself for two hours daily to the lessons in horsemanship of a principal groom who ranked as a first-rate rough-rider; and I gathered manifold experiences amongst the horses—so different from the wild, hard-mouthed horses at Westport, that were often vicious and sometimes trained to vice. There, though spirited, the horses were pretty, generally gentle, and all had been regularly broke. My education was not entirely neglected even as regards sportsmanship; that great branch of philosophy being confided to one of the keepers, who was very attentive to me, in deference to the interest in myself expressed by his idolised mistress, but otherwise regarded me probably as an object of mysterious curiosity rather than of sublunary hope."

It was whilst he was still here that he heard of the intention of his guardians to insist on his going to the Manchester Grammar School instead of to Oxford, as he desired to do. He had some hope of enlisting Lady Carbery's interest in favour of his own proposal; but she, prudently, urged him to submit. He did not, however, cease to raise protests against the arrangements his guardians proposed.



CHAPTER IV.

THE MANCHESTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

IN 1801 De Quincey's guardians finally decided that he should go for three years to the Manchester Grammar School. This he considered an injustice to him, and a great waste of time besides. He was now sixteen years of age; and the report of his previous teachers concerning him had been, not only that he was ripe for the university, but likely to shine there. His recent experiences had confirmed his precocious dislike of schoolboy society, and it was therefore with a keen sense of disappointment and chagrin that he now found himself in his native city. These feelings might have been gradually modified and done away, however, if he had fallen into proper hands. His former teachers had called forth his respect and affection; now, unfortunately, he found himself under the rule of a well-intentioned man, but a pedant, who tried to make up for his defects in scholarship—which his pupils could detect and smile at—by pomposity and an air of authority.

“When first I entered,” he says, “I remember that we read Sophocles; and it was a constant matter of triumph to us, the learned triumvirate of the first form, to see our ‘Archididasculus’ (as he loved to be called) conning our regular lesson before we went up, and laying a regular train, with lexicon and grammar, for blowing

up and blasting (as it were) any difficulties he found in the choruses; whilst *we* never condescended to open our books until the moment of going up, and were generally employed in writing epigrams upon his wig or some such important matter."

If this was a little rude, it will be admitted that it was only boy-like; and the profound contempt a clever boy feels for a pretentious pedantic teacher has become proverbial. For more than a year he bore it; taking advantage as well as he could of all alleviating circumstances, and representing at first mildly, then more urgently, to his guardians the claims he had to be at once transferred to the university. Two great alleviations there arose on the hardship of his lot. The first was that Lady Carbery came, as she had intimated to him that she intended, to pass the Christmas and winter in Manchester; and the other was a literary acquaintance which he formed, and which, though he has not celebrated it so fully in the "*Autobiographic Sketches*" as elsewhere, had a marked influence. It is not improbable that, as the hope of spending a portion of his time congenially in Lady Carbery's society during the winter led him to comply with the ungrateful decision of his guardian, so the acquaintance he made through her sufficed to defer, longer than would otherwise have been the case, his flight from school and from Manchester.

Lady Carbery's visit diffused a brightness round his life in spite of the uncongenial school-tasks. She, having come more and more under the influence of religious convictions, had begun the study of Hebrew, that she might the better investigate for herself the mysteries of the Old Testament; and her knowledge in that tongue she was fain to impart to De Quincey in return for his labours in teaching her Greek. Clearly, the relief that her presence brought into the lad's life was cheering and beneficial.

Still more so, however, that acquaintance of which we spoke, and which well deserves a passing notice here, both because it will revive the memory of a beautiful

and touching figure, and show how early De Quincey's habit of meditation had induced a gravity and repose of manner, which made companionship with the old congenial and fitting. This was the Reverend John Clowes, A.M. (of that family which had the house in Princess Street, where it is claimed by some that De Quincey was born), for over fifty years rector of St. John's, Manchester, a man of wide learning and liberal sympathies. He had become a devotee of Swedenborg, and spent no little part of his time and his fortune in the attempt to disseminate Swedenborgian doctrines, especially amongst the clergy of the Church of England. We have put ourselves in the way of carefully examining quite a pile of Mr. Clowes's publications. They are for the most part sermons and tracts, very miscellaneous, and generally pretty well consigned to oblivion, though his little book of dialogues, "The Caterpillar and the Gooseberry Bush," might well be reprinted by Sunday-school societies at this day with every prospect of producing only good results; for the government of the passions (a matter in which there remains much need for good teaching) is admirably enforced, and in a style such as children would enjoy. He wrote "A Plain Answer to some Objections to Swedenborg's System," which had a large circulation; and in a book, which still survives (having been reissued in a new edition in 1873), called "Outlines of Swedenborg's System," in the form of dialogues, the curious reader will find as good an idea as could be given in small space of the Baron's writings in the questions and answers of Philadelphus to Sophron—the interlocutors. De Quincey soon became a trusted visitor at Mr. Clowes's, and enjoyed the privilege of *entrée* when few or none else would have been admitted at all; and it is hardly too much to say, that if it had not been for the attraction Mr. Clowes's house became to him, it is very doubtful if he would have stayed in Manchester so long as he did. But he himself has given in an out-of-the-way corner so clear and graceful a reminiscence of his old friend, that this chapter would be most incomplete if we did not quote it.

"It was in the year 1801, whilst yet at school," he writes, "that I made my first literary acquaintance. This was with a gentleman, now dead, and little, at any time, known in the literary world; indeed, not at all, for his authorship was confined to a department of religious literature as obscure and narrow in its influences as any that can be named—viz., Swedenborgianism. . . . He was the most spiritual-looking, the most saintly in outward aspect, of all human beings whom I have known throughout life. He was rather tall, pale, and thin; the most unfleshy, the most sublimated spirit dwelling already more than half in some purer world that a poet could have imagined. Among the pictures in the house were more than one of St. John, the beloved apostle, by Italian masters; and neither the features nor the expression were wide of Mr. Clowes's own countenance. He was rector of a large parish, the more active duties of which were discharged by curates; but much of the duties within the church were still discharged by himself, and with exemplary zeal." . . . The extreme quiet and orderliness of the household seem to have impressed themselves on De Quincey's mind. "The venerable old butler," he declares, "put me in mind always, by his noiseless steps, of the Castle of Indolence, where the porter or usher walked about in shoes that were shod with felt, lest any rude echoes might be roused." The painted windows and the organ appealed to an order of sensibilities easily impressed in De Quincey's case, and the picture he draws of them is most striking; but the *real* interest of his sketch lies in the old man himself. "It shows the upright character of the man," he proceeds, "that never in one instance did he seek to bias my opinions in the direction of Swedenborgianism. Upon every other subject he treated me, notwithstanding my boyish years (fifteen–sixteen), as his equal. . . . The common ground on which we met was literature, more especially the Greek and Roman literature, and much he exerted himself in the spirit of the purest courtesy to meet my animation upon these themes. But the interest on his part was too evidently a secondary interest in *me*

for whom he talked, and not in the subject. . . . The little ardour, meantime, with which he had for many years participated in the interests of this world, or all that it inherits, was now rapidly departing. Daily and consciously he was loosing all ties which bound him to earlier recollections; and in particular I remember—because the instance was connected with my last visit, as it proved—that for some time he was engaged daily in renouncing with solemnity (though often enough in cheerful words) book after book of classical literature, in which he had once taken particular delight. Several of these, after taking his final glance at a few passages to which a pencil-mark on the margin pointed his eye, he delivered to me as memorials in time to come of himself. The last of the books given to me, under these circumstances, was a Greek ‘*Odyssey*,’ in Clarke’s edition. ‘This,’ said he, ‘is nearly the sole book remaining to me of my classical library—which, for some years, I have been dispersing among my friends. Homer I retained to the last, and the ‘*Odyssey*’ by preference to the ‘*Iliad*,’ both in compliance with my own taste, and because this very copy was my chosen companion for evening amusement during my freshman’s term at Trinity College, Cambridge—whither I went in the spring of 1743.* Your own favourite Grecian is Euripides; but still you must value—we must all value—Homer. I even, old as I am, could still read him with delight; and as long as any merely human composition ought to occupy my time, I should have made an exception in behalf of this solitary author. But I am a soldier of Christ: the enemy, the last enemy cannot be far off; *sarcinas colligere* is, at my age, the watchword for every faithful sentinel, hourly to keep watch and ward, to wait and to be vigilant. This very day, I have taken my farewell glance at

* De Quincey is in error: 1743 was the date of Mr. Clowes’s birth: probably it is a misprint for 1763. De Quincey throughout is loose in dates here. Mr. Clowes was in his sixtieth year when they met, probably old and venerable-looking much beyond his years. “There were sixty years between us, I imagine, at the least,” De Quincey writes, but there were really only forty or so.

Homer, for I must no more be found seeking my pleasure amongst the works of man; and, that I may not be tempted to break my resolution, I make over this my last book to you.' The act was in itself a solemn one: something like taking the veil for a nun—a final abjuration of the world's giddy agitations. Me it impressed powerfully in after years; because this act of self-dedication to the next world, and of parting from the intellectual luxuries of this, was also, in fact, though neither of us at the time knew it to be such, the scene of his final parting with myself."

But though De Quincey never had the good fortune to meet his friend again, the old man was not so near to the heavenly city as he had believed. His days prolonged themselves through another generation; and it hardly seems to have been his lot to have incurred the half-contemptuous feeling of pity and strangeness entertained generally towards the torpid individual who has outlived his own. For nearly a quarter-of-a-century after this, owing to his blindness and infirmity, it was his way to address tracts to his people periodically, one volume of which at least was published, full of tender wisdom and care for them—upholding for the Gospel the character of a "dispensation of universal grace, mercy, and truth to the whole human race," and mixing with wise disquisition many shrewd and practical hints. In the dedication of this volume of tracts to the people of his parish, which was published in 1820, he speaks of having been for a long time "forbidden by bodily weakness to address you from the pulpit." He died in 1831, in his eighty-ninth year, and his memory is more likely to be preserved because of his kindness to the precocious schoolboy than on account of aught that he has written.

De Quincey, writing in 1836, says: "Some years ago,*

* In the text this word "ago" stands as "after," which must be a slip of the pen or a misprint, which escaped the notice of Professor Masson in his new edition of the Works, vol. ii., as well as the error of making the year of Mr. Clowes's birth (1743), the date of his freshman residence in Oxford. 1761 was really Mr. Clowes's

I saw his death announced in all the public journals as having occurred at Leamington Spa, then in the spring-time of its medicinal reputation. Farewell, early friend ! holiest of men whom it has been my lot to meet ! Yes, I repeat, thirty-five years are past since then [*i.e.*, since 1802, when he parted from Mr. Clowes], and I have yet seen few men approaching to this venerable clergyman in paternal benignity—none certainly in childlike purity, apostolic holiness, or in perfect alienation of heart from the spirit of this fleshly world.”

It was during his schoolboy residence in Manchester, too, that De Quincey, while visiting some friends in Liverpool, was introduced to what was then known as the Liverpool Literary Coterie—the prominent figures of which were Dr. Currie, the biographer of Burns ; Mr. Roscoe, who wrote elegant verses and translated a good deal from the Italian ; and Mr. Shepherd of Gateacre, the author of some volumes on Italian literature. It was flattering to the young lad's vanity that the intellectual benefits were not all on one side. In some things he could be the teacher. Mr. Clarke, a gentleman of large means, with whom De Quincey would appear to have resided, had travelled largely, possessed a good picture-gallery, and at this time amused himself by studying Greek, for which purpose he and De Quincey met at sunrise every summer morning, reading *Æschylus* together. “These meetings,” says De Quincey, “at which we sometimes had the company of any stranger who chanced to be an amateur in Greek, were pleasant enough to my schoolboy vanity—placing me in the position of teacher and guide to men old enough to be my grandfathers.”

It is very piteous to read his appeals to be delivered from the penance of Mr. Lawson's school. In a long letter to his mother, he exhaustively meets her arguments one by one, and then winds up thus :—

freshman's year, and he was a pensioner of Trinity College, having been well taught at Salford Grammar School. (See “Life of John Clowes,” by Theodore Compton—not Crompton, as printed in Professor Masson's edition.)

"I ask whether a person can be happy, or even simply *easy*, who is in a situation which deprives him of *health*, of *society*, of *amusement*, of *liberty*, of *congeniality of pursuits*, and which, to complete the precious picture, admits of no *variety*. I think you will hardly say he can; and yet this description was taken from my own case.

"As to *health*, I may say very fairly that I have not passed one quarter of the time I have been at this school in health. I have not, it is true, been seriously ill; but I have been—what to me is worse—*weary*, and *torpid*, and *languid*; and no wonder, for there are three things at Mr. Lawson's which murder health. The first is want of exercise, which the whole plan of the school seems purposely directed to deny one; in winter there is, for a considerable length of time, not *one* hour in the day for walking out. The second is the badness of the air, which every day grows worse and worse from the increasing numbers of these diabolical factories. The third is the short time one has to eat one's dinner in; I have barely time to push it down, and as to chewing it, that is out of the question. This last circumstance is, on me at least, less gradual in its effects than the two former, though they are all three (I should think) enough to ruin any person's health. This loss of health, however, though *principally*, is not *wholly*, produced by external circumstances; for, as want of health leaves the mind but ill at ease, so the misery of the mind, by alternate reaction, affects the health of the body; they are mutually cause and effect.

"On the next point, you know almost as much of my situation as I know myself. Except Mr. Kelsall's, there is no house in the town where I can go and come away at all hours; and even there I sometimes feel an intruder. Besides, Mr. K. and I have not one idea in common; and Mrs. K. is often out, and oftener engaged. But, if it were otherwise, that can hardly be called society, which one can find at home. Do not think that by society I mean a whole host of intimates and acquaintances. I should dislike such society almost as much as

my present loneliness. Naturally, I am fond of solitude ; but every one has times when he wishes for company ; at these times I know but one place where I can turn to for it ; and there it is not always to be found.

“ *Amusements*, it is evident, without a sharer in them, I can have none ; and yet, who does not occasionally require some relaxation ?

“ You will be surprised, after what I have said in answer to your third negative argument, that I put the want of *liberty* among the grounds of my misery ; but there is nothing inconsistent in this, for, in the first place, I was speaking of freedom with respect to things on which—if on any—school-discipline should lay restraint,—here I am speaking of that liberty which ought to be allowed at schools as much as at any other place—the liberty of taking walks ; and this liberty is by no means to be enjoyed here ; for even at those hours when the school does not interfere with it, our time is so unaccountably and so unnecessarily parcelled out into shreds and scraps by meals and *callings-over*, that at every turn of the day there is something lying in wait to prevent one from taking continued exercise.

“ The fifth cause of my misery contains in itself a world of argument. To give you some idea of my meaning, I must beg you to consider that I am living in a town where the sole and universal object of pursuit is precisely that which I hold most in abhorrence. In this place trade is the religion, and money is the god. Every object I see reminds me of those occupations which run counter to the bent of my nature, every sentiment I hear sounds a discord to my own. I cannot stir out of doors but I am nosed by a factory, a cotton-bag, a cotton-dealer, or something else allied to that most detestable commerce. Such an object dissipates the whole train of romantic visions I had conjured up, and frequently gives the colouring to all my associations of ideas during the remainder of the day.

“ These five evils are, in themselves, sufficiently great ; but my sixth cause of complaint—that they admit of no variety—serves to aggravate them all. Every day, and

every day, with scarcely a moment's variation, returns the same dull routine of stupid employments. If even a happy situation, when chequered by no "sweet interchange" of light and shade, becomes tiresome and disgusting,—what must that situation be which, in itself miserable, superadds this also to complete its misery, that it experiences no change, that it is *uniformity* of misery? Perpetual light is bad; but far worse is that situation where no ray ever enters,

'But cloud instead and ever-during dark.'

All these arguments are enough to prove that I have reason to be miserable; but, if I could bring no such arguments, is not my earnestness a sufficient proof that I am so? Should I have taken all this trouble, and given both you and myself so much uneasiness, to gratify a mere temporary caprice? This consideration ought to have some weight; but, even though it and all my arguments fail to convince you that I am unhappy, the fact is no less certainly so. In short, so habitually miserable do I feel, as sometimes hardly to care about myself, and often to think

'That I would set my life on any chance,
To mend it or be rid on't.'

'But, allowing' (you will say) 'that you are miserable to the full extent, and from the causes that you say you are, still, supposing my arguments for your remaining at the school unanswerable, are not they sufficient in their future consequences to overbalance a year's present misery?' I feel that they are not; but, granting that they were, then I should bring forward those six facts which I have advanced to show what reason I have for being miserable as additional arguments for my leaving the school, even supposing them not sufficient causes to produce misery. At present, however, I think I have no occasion to use them in this double capacity.

"Before I conclude, I must just ask you, my dear mother, whether you know that what I am now request-

ing is not out of the common course? I am sure, from the general tenor and from particular passages of your letters, that you do not know this, which makes a very material difference. In short, this circumstance alone, exclusive of all arguments, makes it *reasonable*, and my arguments, if solid, make it *necessary* for me to be removed from school."

The Mr. Kelsall referred to above was the successor of his father in the business in Manchester. Some portion of De Quincey's patrimony was still invested in that business: hence the request for remittances to be found in later letters. Of this Mr. Kelsall, after failure in business and desolating domestic bereavements, De Quincey gives a touching picture in the final edition of the "Confessions." While in shelter from a shower in the streets of Manchester, he saw a bent but yet familiar figure creeping along the streets. He says that he shrank from presenting himself for fear of causing pain in the too vivid recollection of the happier days he might thus recall to the stricken man.





CHAPTER V.

WANDERINGS IN WALES.

ALL De Quincey's reasonings, representations, and appeals failed of effect. He must either at once choose a profession or stay where he was. As "a profession" meant drudgery in a lawyer's office for years instead of the delights of literary study, he declined to comply, and decided to take the matter into his own hands. It was summer; his seventeenth birthday was drawing near, after which he had resolved that he should no longer be numbered among schoolboys. He wrote to Lady Carbery for a loan of £5. Instead, after some delay, through absence, she sent him £10, saying that though it were never repaid she would not be ruined; and with this and £2 which he had of his own he resolved to run away.

He frankly confesses, however, that there was much to be said on prudential grounds for the view his mother and guardians took. His whole income was £150—a sum too small to maintain him at Oxford. The main reason for sending him to Manchester had been that, after a course there of three years, he would become entitled to £50 a year for a certain number of years—an addition which would have made residence at the university easy. Of the thirty-six months, he had already completed the better half—nineteen; and though, it was true that, partly owing to a wrong-headed course

of medical treatment, and partly owing to the strife and fever of contention with his guardian, he had lost his gaiety and peace of mind ; on the other hand, as a boy passionately fond of books, and dedicated to intellectual pursuits, he could not fail to have enjoyed many happy hours in the midst of general dejection. Yet he exclaims, "O reader, urge not the crying arguments that spoke so tumultuously against me ! Too sorrowfully I feel them. But my sufferings were almost insupportable ; and, but for the blind unconscious conspiracy of two persons, these sufferings would either never have existed, or would have been easily relieved." And in a writing which has not been published, he says of that crisis, and of the temper of mind which it aroused in him, spurring him, as he has expressed it, by blind impulse, as of the locust or the lemming in their journeyings, to one grand effort for freedom : "Sudden resolution, that uttered itself as an irreversible *fiat*, was to escape. But in all common sense, the counter-impulse to *that*, and practically one might think the restraining impulse, would be found instantaneously in the necessity of seeking some provision, such as could be counted on for daily support. A child, you will say, could not overlook this. No ; but an adult, under certain circumstances, might."

In spite of what he had suffered at the hands of his teacher, it is touching to read the characteristic record of the boy's tender relentings on the last evening he was to be in the house. How he took solemn farewell of each familiar room and wept ; how he sought occasion to pass close by the master, and thus to bid him a silent farewell by bowing, as he thought to himself, "He is old and infirm, and in this world I shall not see him again ;" adding, "I could not reverence him intellectually ; but he had been kind to me, and I grieved at the thought of the mortification I should inflict upon him."

One of the members of the Manchester Literary Club, already quoted from, defending De Quincey from charges of disrespect towards Mr. Lawson, says, apparently speaking with authority :—

"It must have been a great change from the manner

in which he was treated by the master of the Bath Grammar School to be addressed as 'Psha! Blockhead,' which was Mr. Lawson's usual mode of addressing his pupils."

It is worth noting, too, that, under a sense of duty towards servants, which had been impressed upon him by his mother, he entrusted to the care of one of his fellow-scholars, who was in his secret, £3, as gratuities to be given to the servants, again reducing the amount in his hand to £9. Having thus, so far as he could, arranged everything, he retired to snatch a few hours' broken sleep, and feverishly to welcome that morning which was to launch him into the world—"that morning," he says, "from which, and from its consequences, my whole succeeding life has in many important points taken its colouring."

In the early morning he got out of the house; and having, after considerable difficulty and risk, got his trunk conveyed to a carrier's, he set off to walk to Chester, carrying a small parcel with some articles of dress under his arm; a small English poet in one pocket, and a small duodecimo containing some of the plays of Euripides—his favourite Greek poet—in the other. It had been his intention to proceed to Westmoreland; but two considerations caused him to shape his course differently: one was, that he was ashamed to present himself to his friends there in the guise of a fugitive schoolboy; the other, concern lest his mother should suffer from this rash step. She had, after spending some years in Bath, and later in Somersetshire, settled at The Priory, Chester; and he went there in the hope of managing to get a secret interview with his sister. After committing to her his plans, he meant to contrive, if possible, through her, some means of communication with his guardians, without the risk of being pounced upon and sent back to school. Some unknown servants of Colonel Penson, his maternal uncle—then home from India on furlough—had eyed the lad hovering about the house with some suspicion. They communicated the fact to their master, by whom De

Quincey was confronted instead of by his sister. He was taken in, and his affairs discussed. "My dear excellent mother," he says, "from the eternal quiet of her decorous household, looked upon every violent or irregular movement, and, therefore, upon mine at present, much as she would have done upon the opening of the seventh seal in the Book of Revelation." His uncle—who, though a good officer, was not a student—had a sneaking sympathy with a young lad preferring a ramble among breezy hills to moping over dusty books. He dissuaded his sister from any interference with the lad's main plans, but suggested the propriety of a small allowance, agreeing with her that it would never do to encourage the younger brothers to mutiny by putting a premium on rebellion in the case of the elder one. And so De Quincey was allowed to go forth, to make his way to Wales, where he wandered about in a most erratic fashion.

As long as he kept up any negotiation with his guardians, in the way we have suggested, he received a regular allowance of a guinea a week. Commenting on this fact, in one place, he says:—"Upon this sum, not, however (as may be supposed), without great difficulty, I continued to obtain a bed, and some apology for supper, in the shape of coffee or tea, at the inns scattered about the Welsh valleys for the sake of the tourist. The old village inns had, till lately, charged the most primitive prices—sixpence, for example, had been the usual rate for a dinner, and so on; but all this had very nearly disappeared under the great revolution of the times. War prices had arisen in the great markets; a great influx of tourists and artists had begun to set in to the Welsh valleys; elegant hotels arose on every side; and the prices were pretty much as on the Bath road. Finding, therefore, that my three shillings a-day did but little at these showy inns, more than the better half being exhausted upon a bed and the perquisites to the 'waiter,' 'chambermaid,' and 'boots,' I came to the resolution of carrying a tent with me and sleeping out of doors. This tent, as may be imagined, was miser-

ably small; both to make it more portable, and also on account of the tent-pole, which to avoid notice and trouble was no more than a common walking-cane. I pitched my tent always on the leeseide of a hill; and, in a land so solitary, and free from 'high-vised' towns, I apprehended but little from any enemies, except the wild mountain cattle: these sometimes used to take umbrage at my intrusion, and advance upon my encampment in the darkness, with what intentions I could not discover, nor perhaps did they know; but I lay in constant anxiety lest some lumbering cow or other should break into my preserve, and poach her heavy foot into my face. This, however, was not the worst evil. I soon found the truth of Napoleon's criticism at St. Helena, on a proposal made for improving the art of war, by portable tents, treble-barrelled guns, &c.—that the practice of *bivouacking*, which offended so deeply the humanity of some philanthropic people, was in fact most favourable to the health of the troops; and that, at most, a screen hung up to windwards was the utmost protection from open air (or properly from the weather, rather than the air), which is consistent with health. The loftier tents of the officers may be an exception; but mine, which resembled more the humbler and crowded tents of the privates, confirmed strikingly the medical objection of Napoleon. I soon found it necessary to resign it in that form; using it rather as a screen against the wind, or, on a calm night, as a pillow. Selecting the ground well on such occasions, I found the advantage of this *sub dio* sleeping in improved health; but summer air and dry ground disappearing, I was at length obliged to seek other modes of lodging."

By-and-by he felt it advisable to drop all correspondence with his guardians. At one time he lodged for weeks at a solitary farmhouse; at another time he subsisted on blackberries, hips, and haws, or on the casual hospitalities which he now and then received in return for such little services as he had an opportunity of rendering. Sometimes he wrote letters of business for cottagers who happened to have relatives in Liverpool or London;

more often he wrote love-letters to their sweethearts for young women who had lived as servants in Shrewsbury, or other towns on the English border. We can easily imagine how the simple young rustics would wonder at the manner in which their thoughts and sentiments were translated into deliciously sounding sentences; and how surprised the old folks would be at the clearness with which their little business affairs were set forth for them in black and white. That this was so De Quincey has established by an instance which he has given us.

“Once in particular, near the village of Llan-tyndw (or some such name), in a sequestered part of Merionethshire, I was entertained for upwards of three days by a family of young people, with an affectionate and fraternal kindness that left an impression upon my heart not yet impaired. The family consisted, at that time, of four sisters and three brothers, all grown up, and all remarkable for elegance and delicacy of manners. So much beauty and so much native good breeding and refinement I do not remember to have seen before or since in any cottage, except once or twice in Westmoreland and Devonshire. They spoke English—an accomplishment not often met with in so many members of one family, especially in villages remote from the high road. Here I wrote, on my first introduction, a letter about prize-money for one of the brothers, who had served on board an English man-of-war; and more privately, two love-letters for two of the sisters. They were both interesting-looking girls, and one of uncommon loveliness. In the midst of their confusion and blushes, whilst dictating, or rather giving me general instructions, it did not require any great penetration to discover that what they wished was, that their letters should be as kind as was consistent with proper maidenly pride. I contrived so to temper my expressions as to reconcile the gratification of both feelings; and they were as much pleased with the way in which I had expressed their thoughts, as (in their simplicity) they were astonished at my having so readily

discovered them. The reception one meets with from the women of a family generally determines the tenor of one's whole entertainment. In this case I had discharged my confidential duties as secretary so much to the general satisfaction, perhaps also amusing them with my conversation, that I was pressed to stay with a cordiality I had little inclination to resist. I slept with the brothers, the only unoccupied bed standing in the apartment of the young women ; but in all other points they treated me with a respect not usually paid to purses as light as mine ; as if my scholarship were sufficient evidence that I was of 'gentle blood.' There I lived with them for three days, and great part of a fourth ; and from the undiminished kindness they continued to show me, I believe that I might have stayed with them up to this time, if their power had corresponded with their wishes."

During his wanderings in Wales, he tells us that he met with a certain Mr. De Haren, who was fortunate enough to carry about with him a select library of German authors, and was very willing to lend a volume, and to discuss his favourite writers with an intelligent companion. "From him it was," says De Quincey, "that I obtained my first lesson in German, and my first acquaintance with German literature. Paul Richter I then first heard of, together with Hippel, a humorist admired by Kant, and Haman, also classed as a humorist, but a nonedescript writer, singularly obscure, whom I have never since seen in the hand of any Englishman, except once of Sir William Hamilton. With all these writers M. De Haren had the means of making me fully acquainted in the small portable library which filled one of his trunks."

We can easily understand how the experiences of these months of wandering in Wales, bringing De Quincey, as they did, into such direct contact with primitive human feelings in solitary villages, must have developed in other directions the precocity which had marked his intellectual powers from the first. There was much of novelty and excitement in the life which he must have thoroughly

enjoyed, and he might have been tempted to prolong this rambling beyond the point where it was not injurious ; but necessity, like an "armed man," came upon him with its stern decree. He found himself actually without money to go on with, beyond a very limited time, and no hope of further supplies—besides the pressure of an ever-growing fear that his guardians might be on his track. He therefore contrived to transfer himself to London, where, in his complete ignorance of the world, he was fain to think that he might get an advance of money on the security of his "expectations." To raise £200 was his purpose ; and this, doled out in four yearly instalments of £50, would, in his idea, suffice till he had reached his majority.





CHAPTER VI.

IN LONDON.

HE himself has told the story of his London life, with such picturesque force and affecting pathos, that few readers can be unacquainted with it. It forms a part of the first section of the "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater." To the pains then endured, and to the weakness induced in the system by want, De Quincey always attributed the sufferings which prompted his escape into opium. It has such an important bearing on his after-life that we must give a general outline of it.

The very capacity to carry out the resolution he had formed to leave school, and to pass the time in wandering in remote solitudes, till his guardians might be brought to yield to his views, shows more self-dependence than might be expected from a youth who had heretofore offended so often by his dreamy and unpractical ways. And the persistency with which he carried out his project to the bitter end indicates the possibility of greater moral strength than he might be credited with. Misfortune soon brought him among strange companions in London. He found a kind of lodging in a house in Greek Street, Soho, which might practically be called unoccupied, though it was really tenanted by a man—an attorney—who carried on a low and disreputable business in it.

De Quincey told Mr. R. Woodhouse that this was the corner house in that street, partly in the square, on the right hand as you go down from Oxford Street. The master had other offices elsewhere, at which he carried on his game. He went by several names. The opium-eater tells a curious tale of his practices upon a foolish butcher who fancied he had a literary talent, and whose intellectual abilities his landlord, for his own ends, flattered in a most fulsome way, but so as nearly to turn the poor butcher's head with vanity.*

The man's name was Brown or Brunell. He was a kind of agent for the Jews with whom De Quincey had opened negotiations for an advance of money, and this it was that brought them into contact. "From the expression of his face, but much more from the contradictory and self-counteracting play of his features, you gathered in a moment that he was a man who had much to conceal, and much, perhaps, that he would gladly forget. His eye expressed wariness against surprise, and passed in a moment into irrepressible glances of suspicion and alarm. No smile that ever his face naturally assumed but was pulled short up by some freezing counteraction, or was chased by some close-following expression of sadness. One feature there was of relenting goodness and nobleness in Mr. Brunell's character, to which it was that subsequently I myself was most profoundly indebted for an asylum that saved my life. He had the deepest, the most liberal and unaffected love of knowledge, but above all, of that specific knowledge which we call literature."

He seems to have been drawn to the starving scholar with a genuine kindly interest; and when, with great reluctance, a request was proffered to him for a nightly corner in the large rat-haunted house, it was readily accorded. De Quincey saw into much of the ongoings there, that might have been presumed to escape, in its deeper shades of suggestion, the nature of one so young; but he generously records:—"My situation, at that time,

* Dr. R. Garnett's "Confessions of an Opium-Eater."

gave me little experience, in my own person, of any qualities in Mr. Brunell's character but such as did him honour; and of his whole strange composition, I ought to forget everything, but that towards me he was obliging and, to the extent of his power, generous." He cannot, however, forego the chance of casting a jet of gentle humour over the grim grotesquerie of the situation.

The only other nightly inhabitant of the large house was a little girl, a poor, forlorn child, apparently ten years old, hunger-bitten and wretched. "Great joy the poor creature expressed when she found that I was in future to be her companion through the hours of darkness. From the want of furniture in the large house, the noise of the rats made a prodigious echoing on the spacious staircase and hall, and amid many real bodily ills, the forsaken child had suffered much from the self-created one of ghosts." They slept on the floor, with bundles of law-papers for a pillow, and with no other covering than a tattered rug and an old horseman's cloak; creeping close together for warmth. De Quincey for a long time subsisted on scraps picked up here and there. "During Brunell's breakfast," he says, "I generally contrived a reason for lounging in; and, with an air of as much indifference as I could assume, took up such fragments as might chance to remain. Sometimes, indeed, there were none remaining. . . . As to the poor child, *she* was never admitted into his study (if I may give that name to his chief depository of parchments, law-writings, &c.); that room was to her the Bluebeard-room of the house, being regularly locked on his departure to dinner, about six o'clock, which usually was his final departure for the night. Whether this child were an illegitimate daughter of Mr. Brunell, or only a servant, I could not ascertain; she did not herself know; but certainly she was treated altogether as a menial servant. No sooner did Mr. Brunell make his appearance, than she went below-stairs, brushed his shoes, coat, &c.; and except when she was summoned to run upon some errand, she never emerged from the

dismal Tartarus of the kitchens to the upper air, until my welcome knock at night called up the little trembling footsteps to the front door. Of her life during the daytime, however, I knew little but what I gathered from her own account at night; for as soon as the hours of business commenced I saw that my absence would be acceptable; and, in general, therefore, I went off and sat in the Parks or elsewhere until nightfall." He tells us that, though in after-years he made efforts to trace this child, he never succeeded. She was uninteresting, neither pretty, nor quick in understanding, nor pleasing in manners; "but I loved the child," he says, "because she was my partner in wretchedness."

By way of explaining how it was that, with so many friends able to aid him in London, De Quincey should have shrunk from applying to any of them, and have allowed himself to sink into such absolute starvation, he tells us he was afraid that by so doing he might run the risk of being discovered to his guardians, and compelled to return to the school—a humiliation he could not have brooked; and that, unpractical and inexperienced as he was, it never struck him that he might have managed to earn his subsistence as a classical reader in a printing-office.

As was inevitable, being himself a *peripatetic*, he soon became acquainted with other *peripatetics*. "Many of these women had occasionally taken my part against watchmen, who wished to drive me off the steps of houses where I was sitting. . . . I feel no shame, nor have any reason to feel it, in avowing that I was then on familiar and friendly terms with many women in that unfortunate condition. The reader needs neither smile at this nor frown. For, not to remind my classical readers of the old Latin proverb, '*Sine Cerere et Baccho*,' &c., it may well be supposed that in the existing state of my purse my relation with such women could not have been an impure one." To one of these poor women he has given a permanent place in literature—for the episode of her kindness to him in his worst strait is one of the most touching things on record, and she reappears

in the opium-dreams. So familiar is the history of Ann—the young girl of sixteen who had been so cruelly wronged—to all readers of English literature, that it is unnecessary to detail it here. But her most memorable act of kindness to him must be glanced at: how, when he had fainted from exhaustion on a doorstep where they were sitting in Soho Square, she ran and spent her last sixpence for wine and spices to revive him, at a moment when she could have had no hope of repayment; how, soon afterwards, having accidentally been met by a friend of the family, he was enabled to procure some articles of dress, and to go to Eton to try and arrange for Lord Westport becoming collateral security for a small loan that he had been promised by a Jew; how he parted with Ann, and how, through insufficient precautions, he was never afterwards, in spite of many and long-continued efforts, able to trace her and to reward her for her ungrudging sacrifice on his behalf; all this he has told with such graphic power and pathos as can hardly fail to touch the heart.

His journey to Eton was fruitless, as he found that Lord Westport had left for Oxford; and though Lord Desert, whom he had met before, treated him hospitably, and promised to do what he could to aid him, he had to return to London, dejected, to resume his old manner of life. By accident, however, very soon after this, and in the most unexpected manner, the way opened for reconciliation with his friends; and he proceeded to Chester, to find his uncle still an inmate of the Priory, with its “deep monastic tranquillity.” This uncle had been for a lifetime in India, and entertained odd views of many things. As may be presumed, there was no lack of topics for talk. Sometimes the nephew, if compelled to defend himself on a subject on which they chanced to take different sides, too clearly had the advantage in point of logic, in spite of his short-sightedness in all matters of worldly experience.

“It must not be supposed,” says De Quincey, “that I regarded my own particular points of superiority; or that I used them with any vanity or view to present

advantages. On the contrary, I sickened over them, and laboured to defeat them. But in vain I sowed error in my premises, or planted absurdities in my assumptions. Vainly I tried such blunders as putting four terms into a syllogism, which, as all the world knows, ought to run on three, a tripod it ought to be, by all rules known to man, and behold I forced it to become a quadruped. Upon my uncle's military haste and tumultuous energy in pressing his opinions, all such delicate refinements were thrown away. With disgust *I* saw, with disgust *he* saw, that too apparently the advantage lay with me in the result; and whilst I worked like a dragon to place myself in the wrong, some fiend apparently so counterworked me, that eternally I was reminded of the Manx halfpennies, which lately I had continually seen current in North Wales; bearing for their heraldic distinction three human legs in armour, but so placed in relation to each other, that always one leg is vertical and mounting guard on behalf of the other two, which therefore are unable to sprawl aloft in the air,—in fact, to be as absurdly negligent as they choose, relying upon their vigilant brother above, and upon the written legend or motto, *STABIT QUO CUNQUE JECERIT* (Stand it will upright, though you should fling it in any conceivable direction). What gave another feature of distraction and incoherency to my position was that I still occupied the position of a reputed boy, nay, a child in the estimate of my audience, and of a child in disgrace."

So, after one of these unsatisfactory discussions, under the taunt of his uncle that he was wasting his time, he agreed to proceed to Worcester College, Oxford, with the allowance of £100 per annum, which his guardians had offered, and under the unskilled assurance of his uncle that, "with economy, this sum might be made to meet the necessities of the case." As we shall see hereafter, Colonel Penson's good opinion of his nephew did not in any way suffer because of that runaway adventure.



CHAPTER VII.

OXFORD.

DE QUINCEY'S life at Oxford was little in conformity with the ordinary traditions of that ancient seat of learning. He had come burdened with experiences, luckily not common to undergraduates ; and natural tendency combined with outward circumstances to repress the "genial currents," which it is as much the prerogative of Oxford to awaken and to direct as it is to instil, or to confirm, love for liberal studies in themselves—for the Greek and the Latin poets, and for "divine philosophy." We have seen the place which Oxford had in his mind when he quarrelled with his guardians. His one passion was to be relieved from the irksomeness of schoolboy restraints, as well as saved from the drudgery of professional training ; to be launched into a world of learning, free to follow his intellectual bent, and to seek knowledge for its own sake.

In view of the smallness of his fortune, and of his indifference to practical considerations, of which his guardians may already have had some tokens, something might well be urged in favour of their policy, looked at from the level of common sense ; but more is to be said by way of regret that their treatment of De Quincey was so unsympathetic, and so little tempered by any perception of the real quality of his character, as only

precipitated him the sooner into the whirlpool from which they would fain have saved him. He also fancied that he had made a mistake in the choice of his college, and that, in many ways, he would have been more fortunately situated had he entered Brasenose instead of Worcester, which he would have done had he completed his term of years at the Manchester Grammar School. Still, he studied hard, but not exactly in the lines that lead to university honours. He could have stood an examination at any time in Greek; perhaps been able even to quiz and puzzle his examiners; but the ambition that is necessary to sustain set college studies had departed from him. His exceptional life during the year that had passed, and the sufferings he had undergone, induced some morbidity and disinclination to associate with others; and he was in no little danger of subsiding into a helpless, brooding apathy. He thus speaks of his early college life:—"I, whose disease was to meditate too much and to observe too little, upon my first entrance on college life, was nearly falling into a deep melancholy, from brooding too much on the sufferings I had witnessed in London." Added to his distress from this cause, there was the distracting sense of giving the future in pledge for the present by borrowing from Jews at heavy interest. "My necessities," he frankly says, "had not arisen from any extravagance or youthful levities (these my habits and the nature of my pleasures raised me far above), but simply from the vindictive malice of my guardian, who, when he found himself no longer able to prevent me from going to the university, had, as a parting token of his good-nature, refused to sign an order granting me a shilling beyond the allowance made to me at school, viz., £100 per annum. Upon this sum it was, in my time, barely possible to have lived in college; and not possible to a man who, though above the paltry affectation of ostentatious disregard for money, and without any expensive tastes, confided, nevertheless, rather too much in servants, and did not delight in the petty details of minute economy. I soon, therefore, became embarrassed; and

at length, after a most voluminous negotiation with the Jew (some parts of which, if I had leisure to rehearse them, would greatly amuse my readers), I was put in possession of the sum I asked for."

In these circumstances, it was easy to foresee the possibility of his sinking into depression and melancholy. He was saved from this by the influence which the works of Wordsworth and Coleridge—as yet little known—exercised over him. He tells us that to the perusal of the "Lyrical Ballads," more especially to that of "The Ancient Mariner," he attributed the unfolding of his mind. The continuous study of the earlier works of those our two greatest modern poets and thinkers kept his sympathies alive—compelled him, as it were, to an interest in Nature and in Man, and opened for him a pathway to the highest appreciative enjoyment of the masters of English literature—an enjoyment from which too often scholars are shut out by strict devotion to the classics till it is all too late,—the sensibilities for beauty other than that of the niceties of dead languages having been nipped, like a plant by early frost. Expert as De Quincey already was in all these things, he lost less than he gained, by being at this time so fully taken possession of by the dawning splendours of a new era of English poetry—a circumstance which, in spite of himself, inspired him with something of the zeal of an apostle, and opened up for him the hope that in days not far distant, if not now, he might do something towards making others the sharers of his delights.

Already, in many flying visits to London, he had sought out literary people, whom he may have presumed not unlikely to bring him into personal relationship with the writers who had so benefited him. One of these was Charles Lamb.

It was in 1804, his second year at college, too, that he first tasted opium. He had been suffering severely from a neuralgic affection, due, it may be, in some measure to exposure during his wanderings, or to want of thought in immersing his head when warm in cold water. In the streets of London he had met a college

friend, who, on his explaining his condition, recommended opium—a fact suggesting that he may possibly have had one friend at Oxford with whom he could exchange a word on Coleridge. Be that as it may, he speedily discovered, as he says, a “beatific chemist,” near the “stately Pantheon,” who for some coppers became the “minister of celestial pleasures.” “Here was a panacea,” he exclaims, “*α φάρμακον νήπενθεε*, for all human woes: here was the secret of happiness, about which philosophers had disputed for so many ages, at once discovered: happiness might now be bought for a penny, and carried in the waistcoat-pocket; portable ecstasies might be had corked up in a pint bottle, and peace of mind could be sent down in gallons by the mail-coach. But if I talk in this way,” he suddenly pulls up, “the reader will think I am laughing; and I can assure him, that nobody will laugh long who deals much in opium: its pleasures even are of a grave and solemn complexion; and in his happiest state, the opium-eater cannot present himself in the character of *L'Allegro*: even then he speaks and thinks as becomes *Il Penseroso*.”

In his “*Suspiria*” he informs us that Levana was often in his dreams at Oxford: he knew her by her Roman symbols; that already the sense of a *Pariah world*, shadowing a mighty abstraction, had taken possession of his mind and heart, fed by suggestions of the sufferings he had witnessed in London; that already he could say of the *Three Ladies of Sorrow*, “‘One of whom [*Mater Lachrimarum*] I know, and the others too surely I shall know.’ For already, in my fervent youth, I saw (dimly relieved upon the dark background of my dreams) the imperfect lineaments of the awful sisters.” And ever the agitations of childhood reopen in strength and sweep in upon his brain with the power and the grandeur of recovered life.

At this time, and for several years, however, he was an occasional rather than a constant devotee; and exercised self-control enough to enable him to extend his curiosities into new fields. In 1805 he had begun the study of German in earnest, and had soon made himself

a proficient in it. The desire to unlock for himself the secrets of Herder and Kant, of whom he had heard, was the main inducement; but he soon found that, by a little toil, he had purchased *entrée* into a fair kingdom; and Richter and the rest were his rich reward. Goethe, too,—though De Quincey could never be ranked among his English *worshippers*. He viewed the great modern pagan with surprise that did not disturb calm scrutiny, and has scattered through his writings some incisive if not always exhaustive criticisms on the sage of Weimar.

During his college residence, his visits to his friends the Merritts, the Craggs, and others, at Liverpool, furnished much pleasure, as we learn from his papers. During a visit to the former at Everton in 1805, we find him reviewing his idea of the “Constituents of Human Happiness,” on which he had at an earlier period made some notes while on a visit at Coniston. These notes are so characteristic, and indicate so much serious thought, that we cannot but think our readers will be glad to possess them.

“CONSTITUENTS OF HAPPINESS.

“CONISTON, *Monday Morning, August 18, 1805.*

“1. A capacity of thinking—*i.e.*, of abstraction and reverie.

“2. The cultivation of an interest in all that concerns human life and human nature.

“3. A fixed, and not merely temporary, residence in some spot of eminent beauty:—I say not merely temporary, because frequent change of abode is unfavourable to the growth of local attachment, which must of necessity exercise on any, but more especially on a contemplative mind, a most beneficial influence; and I say of eminent beauty, both for its own sake as being intrinsically an abundant source of pleasure and a most powerful assistant of fancy, and also as justifying and giving efficacy to the local attachment spoken of above.

In this last view, its value is well evidenced by my own case, who in many instances wherein I have formed an infant attachment to a place not beautiful from associating with its scenery the pleasure derived from thinking, or reading, or other pleasures, have felt this attachment combated by my perception of its homeliness.

"4. Such an interchange of solitude and interesting society as that each may give to each an intenser glow of pleasure.

"*Books*, from which are derived a double pleasure—viz., 1. That furnished by the matter of the book; 2. That furnished by the consciousness of intellectual advancement, in which are involved the consciousness of extending the scale of means instrumental to happiness, and also of extending one's hold on the respect of men both on account of the actual increase of respectability, and also on account of the increasing power of enforcing one's claims by conversation and letters.

"6. Some great intellectual project, to which all intellectual pursuits may be made tributary, thus giving to employments, in themselves pleasurable in the highest degree, that separate pleasure which even irksome employments borrow from the pleasurable of the object to which they are pursued as instrumental.

"7. Health and vigour.

"8. The consciousness of a supreme mastery over all unworthy passions (anger, contempt, and fear), and over all appetites; together with a highly cherished benevolence; or, to generalise this canon, a sense of moral elevation and purity.

"9. A vast predominance of contempt, varied with only so much of action as the feelings may prompt by way of relief and invigoration to the faculty of contempt.

"10. Both as subsidiary to the last, and also for its own value, a more than ordinary emancipation from worldly cares, anxieties, and connections, and from all that is comprehended under the term business; so that no frequent demands may be made on one's time, and thoughts, and feelings of interest, by subjects not of

value enough to engage them. To this end one's fortune should be concentrated in one secure depository, so as that the interest may be most easily collected; and all family arrangements should be definite and simple, and therefore not requiring much superintendence; and in Ely Bates's phrase, one should 'be compact in life.'

" 11. The education of a child.

" 12. One which, not being within the range of any man's control, I should not mention, only that experience has read me a painful lesson on its value—a personal appearance tolerably respectable. I do not mean to say attractive (for that is not necessary, and with such a congregation of gifts from fortune and nature as must unite to secure the attainment of the eleven preceding constituents of happiness, cannot reasonably be expected), but so far not repulsive, and on a level with the persons of men in general, as that though, apart from the intellectual superiority of its owner, there should be nothing to excite interest—there should, on that superiority being made known, and a consequent interest existed, be nothing in its general effect to contradict that interest. A mediocrity of personal advantages, accompanied, however, with the pleasing expression resulting from the union of moral with intellectual worth, is (I am convinced) most favourable to such facility and familiarity of intercourse with all ranks of men as is the best avenue to an extensive acquaintance with humanity. Where such moderate advantages as these, however, are wanting, this want may be best compensated—(1.) By that temperate and unostentatious dignity of manners and general tranquillity and composure of behaviour which bespeaks a mind at peace with itself, that, being conscious of no claims to attention on that ground (as far as any claim can be acquired thereby), made none, and also, rating at only its due price the quality of such attention, had purified itself of all anxiety for it, and had sought its pleasures and consolations elsewhere and more worthily, disdaining to hold any material part of its happiness as a trembling

pensioner on the smiles of beings for the most part ranking in actual value decidedly below itself. (2.) By acquiring a high literary name, which, with the mass of men (of whom I am here speaking), has the effect of impressing them with a consciousness that you, who hold part in the gaze and notice and comments of collective man, are indifferent to the thoughts of individual man, and also the effect of setting you apart in their feelings from the ordinary classes of men, so as to be no longer a fit subject for comparison with them, by which comparison it was that you chiefly suffered. These are the best substitutes, I believe, with men of a middle order; men of the highest order are not concerned in this question; and, in the turmoil of worldly intercourse, *money* supersedes both the reality and the substitutes, apart or jointly.

“EVERTON, *Saturday Morning, August 22, 1805.*

“Concerning happiness, this addition to my speculation at Coniston occurred to me.

“Nature provides to all men a sufficient supply of happiness, during that time when they have not sufficient intellect to apprehend and ascertain, or foresight to secure to themselves, sources of voluntary happiness—an involuntary happiness proceeding from an exuberance of animal joy and spirits: this she withdraws in regular progression with the advancement of the intellect, and through the *instrumentality* of that very intellect. On the decay of these self-supporting spirits commences the incumbency (which rests on every man) to provide for himself a source of permanent stimulus; and at this crisis it is that wisdom most fails the souls of men; for at this period most men begin to resort to liquors and the turbulent bustle of the world to give a feverish warmth to their else shivering spirits. This is obviously every way a low and ruinous stimulus; but, as some source of excitement is necessary, it remains to inquire *what?* And this I answer, that I am firmly persuaded that there is none but a deep interest in

those exhaustless and most lofty subjects of *human life* and *human nature*: to these are allied and ministerial, all branches of moral science, as well as records of human transactions, and all that part of history from the foundation of the world, and of voyages and travels, which records the varieties and traces the revolutions of human nature as exhibiting itself in the forms of manners, customs, literature, &c., and all fine fictions which exercise the same wholesome feelings that are put into a happy and quiet frame by such an acquaintance with humanity as is here spoken of. And hence arises, as I am tutored by my own experience, a gradual extension of interest to many other classes of books, which though in themselves not directly capable of gratifying this passion, yet are subsidiary to some branches of the philosophy which nurtures it. This increases: 1. By an increasing perception and a conviction *familiarised to the feelings* of the intimate relation such subordinate branches have with the main branches of this pursuit. 2. By the deepening of the primary interest in the main branches themselves, from which deepening all that aids them must of necessity borrow depth.

“As an exemplification of what I have here said, I must record two facts in the history of my own mind. 1. The sudden swell and growth of my interest in the origin of association amongst men, and, in general, in a simplified view of political science, in the spring of this year whilst at Everton. 2. In my desire to read Edwards’ ‘West Indies,’ ‘Gibbon,’ &c., and various other works, which formerly, for their own value intrinsically, and apart from the reference they bear to the subject, I should have read merely as a task. Yesterday also I perceived the closeness of the connection which *Political Economy* has, in all that relates to the division of labour, &c., with the philosophy of society. Even that dreary study of languages borrows from the splendour of the objects to which it is subservient so much of that splendour as to impart to them on the whole, at proper seasons, considerable pleasure.

“In the education of a child, therefore, the grand

object is to lead him to cultivate an interest in humanity, and to avail yourself of the time when such an interest has yet but a weak hold on him to perfect him in all those parts of knowledge (as languages) which are : 1. Assistant to his main purpose when he wakens to a full sense of it ; and 2. Which, being so, might interrupt or much impede his career after he had entered on it.

"One principal instrument in the generation of such an interest I believe to be the formation of two or three local and a few personal attachments."

From various notes of later dates we cull the following, as illustrating his habit of self-questioning in matters that may be said to lie between the world of thought and practice, constantly influencing and modifying each other :—

"In proof of the non-development of the passion for fame during childhood, we may observe that children are never anxious about the opinion of persons at a distance. But concerning this I must think again."

"Healthy and sound humour must in this, as one of its characteristics, differ from that which is unsound, in that it never takes for the ground of its mirth any ludicrous feature in the character, habits, &c., with which moral deformity is in any degree associated. Thus the threadbare coat of an author, the *elevation* of his dwelling, &c., are all subjects of good-natured merriment, because they raise only a merry smile with which no disgust or contempt is mixed ; whereas in the humour of Swift and R. B. Sheridan there is always malice and sarcasm felt from the nature of the subjects selected ; and it is on this ground principally that I account for my rooted dislike of Sheridan."

"Q. Whether it be not a sufficient test of a false or mean emotion that we are ashamed of it afterwards ?

"Q. Whether any pursuit can be of the first class in dignity and value in which itself is not the end : thus, in depreciation of war,

'In war itself war is no ultimate purpose.'—*Coleridge*."

De Quincey, after passing through all his preliminary stages, successfully underwent the written examination for his degree. This is fully confirmed by the recollections of Mr. Grinfield, already quoted from; for he says:—

“I had many letters from him during his tour in Ireland, which unfortunately have been lost. I then never heard from him till we met at Oxford. He went to Worcester College, and I entered Lincoln, but we sometimes met; and I often heard of him, and knew he was much admired there. On coming into residence he secured the services of one Schwartzburg, a German, who taught him Hebrew, and whom he made a good deal of a companion for some time. From this Schwartzburg it may have been that he first derived his passion for the German literature and philosophy.* It was well known that Dr. Cotton, the Provost of Worcester, had formed the very highest opinion of him; and I have heard it said that Dr. Goodenough of Christ Church, who was one of the examiners, declared to a member of Worcester College, ‘You have sent us the cleverest man I ever met with; if his *vivâ voce* examination to-morrow correspond with what he has done to-day, he will carry everything before him.’

“But owing, as it was said, to some offence he took with the examiners, he disappeared from Oxford, and never passed the *vivâ voce*. I rather incline to believe that he had some distrust of his own presence of mind, feeling that his intellect was somewhat impatient of grappling with the smaller points which is demanded in a university examination. . . . I can well remember a warm discussion with him at college on the merits of Southey and Coleridge, in which I rashly charged him with some leaning towards deistical principles. He was so much affected that he burst into tears, took up his

* In this Mr. Grinfield is so far wrong. Schwartzburg may have confirmed him in his love for German, but, as we have seen, De Haren, one of the friends he made in his wanderings in Wales, first introduced him to German and interested him in German authors and philosophers.

cap, and suddenly left the room. He was so much hurt by that insinuation, that we ceased to correspond in after-life."

From the account De Quincey gave to Mr. Richard Woodhouse, it would appear that Worcester College in those days was very lax in many things. At first De Quincey was inclined to be sociable, and went to a wine-party or two, returning the compliment by asking some of his fellow-students to his rooms, but their conversation was, in his idea, so childish, so unintellectual, that he drew off altogether. A Latin declamation that fell to him assured him that he was taken notice of; and his tutor, who was named Jones, urged him to prepare for the B.A. examination and go in for honours. This he was not inclined to do at first; but, afterwards, when he learned that in the Greek examination the answers were to be given in Greek, he felt that this was worth doing, and consented; but at the last moment this was changed, and De Quincey turned from Oxford in disgust. The examination he did undergo, De Quincey says, was on a Saturday—was oral and in Latin; if this is right, there must have been some slight lapse of memory as to the day in the account given above.

We learn from other sources of Dr. Cotton's high opinion of De Quincey, and here quote his testimony to personal character as well as to intellectual acquirements:—

"During the period of his residence he was generally known as a quiet and studious man. He did not frequent wine-parties, though he did not abstain from wine; and he devoted himself principally to the society of a German named Schwartzburg, who is said to have taught him Hebrew. He was remarkable even in those days for his rare conversational powers, and for his extraordinary stock of information upon every subject that was started."

These reports of his Oxford life tend to show that he was not so absolutely retired and isolated during his residence there as a too harsh construction of his own words, written afterwards, when the memory of severe

mental struggles was more vivid than the recollection of outward facts, might lead one to infer. His name remained on the college books till December 1810, but his real connection with Oxford ceased in 1808, and he took no degree.

One of his contemporaries through all his years of residence was John Wilson, who achieved such a reputation as amounted almost to notoriety. He was not only famous as a student, but as a sportsman. And it well indicates the retirement, even the isolation, in which De Quincey lived among his own dreams and interests, that he never even heard of this brilliant figure of Magdalen.

"Possibly I myself," he says, "was the one sole gownsman who had not then found my attention fixed by his most heterogeneous reputation."

That De Quincey did not fail to carry away from Oxford very clear ideas both of its merits and defects as a place of the higher education is abundantly testified by many passages scattered through his writings. In after-life he was wont to contrast the universities of Scotland with those of England, and, much as he loved Scotland, he was quick to discern, and well able to illustrate, the great loss to the nation arising from her lack of provision for *extending*, in contradistinction from *cultivating*, the field of knowledge—scientific, theological, and other; and the contrasts—sometimes very minute—which he was able to draw between the Scottish universities and Oxford in this respect proves how completely he studied the system during these student years, in spite of his confessions of meditative vagary and lack of interest in what surrounded him.





CHAPTER VIII.

WORDSWORTH AND COLERIDGE.

IF De Quincey failed to carry from Oxford the kind of reputation which tutors and examiners delight in, he had appropriated influences of another and yet more prevailing kind. He tells us repeatedly, by way of justifying a tendency to deprecate the excessive deference to classical studies, that "all his sensibilities were at an early period laid hold of by the greatness of our own literature." During his residence at Oxford this distinctive part of his education was carried on—systematised. The "Lyrical Ballads," which had been published in 1798, he had read in the following year, and had thereafter been careful to seek for and to study everything that came from the same hands. These writings appealed to and awakened another sense than the ancient poets had ever touched. Phantasy, weird and wildly dreamy, or again still as a pastoral solitude; the simple sentiment of peasant life; and the revelation of the inner spirit of nature, all seemed here to join hands, like a band of graces, to produce one unique impression,—that of a new revelation of beauty and significance in ordinary human life, and a concurrent ineffable sense of the mystery that everywhere broods over it. It came to De Quincey, as to one who had been waiting for the sign. He was actually taken possession of—filled with

delight ; and, with that mingled curiosity and generous fervour which is one of the noblest traits of ingenuous youth, he was moved to seek to come into close personal communion with the authors of his pleasure. And this, be it noted, when the name of Wordsworth was still, in the most influential quarters, but a byword and a sign to awaken scorn. He had written to Wordsworth as early as 1803, and had actually gone to Westmoreland later with the purpose of calling upon him ; but an overpowering feeling of reverence and besetting shyness caused him, as he himself declares, to turn back when within a short distance of Wordsworth's door. The correspondence which began in 1803 went on for many years.

In the first letter, which bears date July 29, 1803, Wordsworth wrote that he was just on the point of leaving on that famous tour in Scotland with Coleridge and his sister, to which he refers by way of excusing a hasty letter ; but he also adds that he is "a lazy and impatient letter-writer," and takes occasion to reflect "how many things there are in a man's character of which his writings, however miscellaneous or voluminous, will give no idea ! how many thousand things which go to making up the value of a practical moral man, concerning not one of which any conclusion can be drawn from what he says of himself in the world's ear !"

The next letter was written after the poet's memorable visit to Scotland, and is a somewhat singular one from a man who had absolved himself from writing any save "business letters"—clearly showing that he regarded his correspondent as an exceptional one. But here, too, he assumes the rôle of mentor, and in the course of many reflections and moralisings, remarks on the low morals of the universities some time previously, going on to add his specific warnings, and such suggestions as these :—That there is no true dignity but in virtue, temperance, and chastity ; and that the best safeguard of all these is the cultivation of pure pleasures—namely, those of the intellect and affections. And he adds, that he has much anxiety on this head, from a sincere concern in

De Quincey's welfare, and the melancholy retrospect which forces itself upon him of the number of men of genius who have fallen beneath the evils that beset them. "I speak in simplicity and tender apprehension," he urges, "as one lover of nature and of virtue speaking to another." And then he goes on to tell how "a wretched creature of the name of Peter Basley" has pillaged and plagiarised the "Lyrical Ballads," especially "The Idiot Boy;" and, not content with this, in a note annexed to the same poem, had spoken of him *by name* as the *simplest*—*i.e.*, the most contemptible—of all poets. The complicated baseness of this, he says (for the plagiarisms were absolutely by wholesale), had grieved him to the heart for the sake of poor human nature; that anybody could combine (as this man in some way or other must have done) an admiration and love of those poems with moral feelings so detestable, hurt him beyond measure.*

In 1805 De Quincey made inquiries respecting Coleridge, and finding that he was then in Malta, filling that secretaryship to Sir Alexander Ball, he was fain to have set out for Malta for the mere purpose of seeing the poet. Circumstances of a private kind arose to prevent his carrying out this purpose; but his feelings may be guessed when he heard, in the beginning of 1807, that Coleridge had returned home, and that an introduction to him could without difficulty be obtained.

When on a visit in 1807 to a relation at the Hot Wells, he learnt that Coleridge was staying with a friend not far from Bristol. This friend was Mr. Poole of Nether Stowey. To Mr. Poole's house he went. Coleridge, however, had left it. But Mr. Poole hospitably urged him to remain in hope of Coleridge's return. De Quincey accordingly spent two days with Mr. Poole, and gives, from his own knowledge, a sketch

* A careful search in the British Museum Library in the hope of finding Peter Basley's volume was unsuccessful, and especially disappointing, inasmuch as excerpts could no doubt have been gleaned from it, amusing and instructive in several ways.

of Mr. Poole's person and character, which is evidently very descriptive of the original. De Quincey writes:—

“He lived in a rustic, old-fashioned house, amply furnished with modern luxuries, and a good library. Mr. Poole had travelled extensively, and had so entirely devoted himself to his humble fellow-countrymen who resided in his neighbourhood, that for many miles round he was the general arbiter of their disputes, the guide and counsellor of their daily life; besides being appointed executor and guardian to his children by every third man who died in or about the town of Nether Stowey.” . . .

De Quincey having been informed that Coleridge was at Bridgewater, and likely to stay there longer than Mr. Poole had fancied, he left Nether Stowey for that place, in search of the poet. This is the account he gives of his first interview with the author of “*Christabel* :”—

“I had received directions for finding out the house where Coleridge was visiting; and in riding down a main street of Bridgewater, I noticed a gateway corresponding to the description given me. Under this was standing, and gazing about him, a man whom I shall describe! In height he might seem to be above five feet eight (he was in reality about an inch and a half taller, but his figure was of an order which drowns the height); his person was broad and full, and tended even to corpulence; his complexion was fair, though not what painters technically style fair, because it was associated with black hair; his eyes were large and soft in their expression, and it was from the peculiar appearance of haze or dreaminess, which mixed with their light, that I recognised my object. This was Coleridge. I examined him steadfastly for a minute or more, and it struck me that he saw neither myself nor any other object in the street. He was in a deep reverie, for I had dismounted, made two or three trifling arrangements at an inn-door, and advanced close to him, before he had apparently become conscious of my presence. The sound of my voice, announcing my own

name, first awoke him ; he started, and for a moment seemed at a loss to understand my purpose or his own situation ; for he repeated rapidly a number of words which had no relation to either of us. There was no *mauvaise honte* in his manner, but simple perplexity, and an apparent difficulty in recovering his position among daylight realities. This little scene over, he received me with a kindness of manner so marked that it might be called gracious.

“Coleridge led me to a drawing-room and rang the bell for refreshments, and omitted no point of a courteous reception. He told me that there would be a very large dinner-party on that day, which perhaps might be disagreeable to a perfect stranger ; but, if not, he could assure me of a most hospitable welcome from the family. I was too anxious to see him, under all aspects, to think of declining this invitation. And these little points of business being settled, Coleridge, like some great river, the Orellana or the St. Lawrence, that had been checked and fretted by rocks or thwarting islands, and suddenly recovers its volume of waters, and its mighty music, swept at once, as if returning to his natural business, into a continuous strain of eloquent dissertation, certainly the most novel, the most finely illustrated, and traversing the most spacious fields of thought, by transitions the most just and logical, that it was possible to conceive. . . .

“This hospitable family,” De Quincey adds, “were distinguished for their amiable manners and enlightened understandings ; they were descendants from Chubb, the philosophic writer, and bore the same name. For Coleridge they all testified deep affection and esteem, sentiments which the whole town of Bridgewater seemed to share, for in the evening, when the heat of the day had declined, I walked out with him ; and rarely, perhaps never, have I seen a person so much interrupted in one hour's space as Coleridge on this occasion, by the courteous attentions of young and old.”

His mother being then resident in Somersetshire, De Quincey was frequently in Bristol in those years. His

love of roving among the hills and valleys of that region can be readily understood, and we can the more fully appreciate his many references to the Quantock and Mendip Hills in the light of these earlier records. The following is a letter to his sister, who was then visiting at Miss Montier's at Clapham, interesting, we think, as containing a characteristic record of one of his wanderings there :—

“CLIFTON, September 15, 1807.

“MY DEAR SISTER,—I received your letter on Sunday ; but I was not able then to get guineas changed into notes ; and yesterday a very remarkable aberration in my account of time during a walk in Somersetshire threw me nearly five hours wide of the time within which I had planned to limit the extent of my walk. This blunder of memory seems to me even yet so marvellous that I think it as well worthy of record in the diary of a metaphysician as a natural philosopher would think a parhelion or a lunar rainbow in his. I had crossed the Avon, with the intention of taking a little walk of nine or ten miles ; but having turned to the right on the downs leading to Clevedon, I found myself in a valley not very interesting at the part which I entered, but closed at the upper end with such a solemn amphitheatre of hills as I could not resolve to leave unvisited. Having reached this upper end, I just wished to cross the valley to the opposite hills ; and, having crossed it, I felt some curiosity to know what might be on the other side of those hills. Mounting, therefore, I found a long range of ferny heaths bounded by the Bristol Channel. Now, the fern, where it is high, makes an admirable couch ; for, wherever you lie down, you find yourself curtained by a noiseless bower. Here then, the revellings of my morning spirits being a little subdued by the gentle fatigue of a long walk and the warmth of the day, I lay down with the sea and South Wales in my view ; and first I began to muse on the valley I had just crossed (which, by the way, I took to

be one of the unexplored parts of Somersetshire—known only to me and the colonisers). I questioned myself on what I should do if any of the natives, having seen me from the wigwams I had passed in that valley, should come in my rear and invest my bower; giving me first notice of their approach by a specimen of the warwhoop, and perhaps at the same time should steal round the promontory to the right in their canoes. I arranged the speech which I should address to their chief, and whether it would be better to make him a present of my waistcoat buttons or my coat. This led me to a speculation on the essential differences of savage and civilised life and their causes; as, *e.g.*, how much of the virtue and moral elevation found amongst the Northern Indians is due to the influences of beautiful natural scenery; how far, among civilised men, the seclusion from such scenery in large towns is compensated by the visual representations of it in pictures and the intellectual suggestions of it (or pictures in vision) in poems, romances, &c.; of the want of a theory of manners; how far such a theory would be illuminated by, or would illuminate, other questions of metaphysics; of the hatred which women bear to metaphysics; of the other absurdities of women; but this topic, yielding a very rich harvest of thought, was not reaped in a short time; and I was just thinking in what degree the intensity of such absurdities was mitigated or heightened by the air of Clapham when the bell of a sheep, which had rambled near my bower, awoke me from my day-dream, or rather my evening-dream; for, before I came in sight of fairyland, it was nigh twilight, and long before I reached Ashton Hill I had no other compass by which to steer amongst those downs and dingles than the trees on its summit, which were just dimly distinguishable as a stain upon the clear sky by which they were backed. About half after seven I reached the ferry—wondering (as I do yet) how it could be more than three o'clock, at which time I had proposed to be at home.

“I sat down with a firm determination not to write more than three lines—having letters, &c., prayers and

commands, blessings and curses, to send to the four winds. However, I am not sorry that my desire to account satisfactorily for losing a day in answering your letter has drawn me on to a very decent length ; therefore I may take my leave.—Believe me ever, my dear sister, your most affectionate brother,

“THOS. DE QUINCEY.

“*P.S.*—Mrs. Coleridge is with her children in Bristol, but Mr. Coleridge still remains at Stowey. Hartley Coleridge dined with me a few days ago ; and I gained his special favour, I believe, by taking him—at the risk of our respective necks—through every dell and tangled path of Leighwood. However, Derwent still continues my favourite.”

Very shortly after the date of this letter De Quincey returned to the Hot Wells, and met Coleridge there. In conversation, he found that Coleridge was in some difficulty owing to his having engaged to lecture at the Royal Institution in the coming winter, and was unable to accompany his wife and children to the north, where they were to visit Wordsworth and be taken in charge by Southey. De Quincey agreed to unite with Mrs. Coleridge in a postchaise, and they set forwards—Mrs. Coleridge, with her two sons, Hartley, aged nine, Derwent, about seven ; her beautiful little daughter, Sara, about five ; and himself.

They went by the direct route, through Gloucester and Bridgenorth, and reached Liverpool on the third day, where they spent some time, and saw some distinguished persons at the house of a rich merchant, Mr. Koster, with whose daughters Southey had made acquaintance during his visit to Portugal. This family De Quincey declares to have been one of the most accomplished he ever knew, and in their society he met and conversed with the famous singer, Madame Catalani, whom he had already frequently heard sing.

After a week thus spent in Liverpool, the party pursued their journey, reaching Grasmere quite safely in

about the usual time demanded for such stages in these days. The account of the reception has more than ordinary interest. De Quincey says, that when at some distance he saw the cottage, and recognised it as that of which he had previously gained a glimpse from Hammerscar, on the opposite side of the lake, he was seized with something of the old panic, which did not quite leave him till he was involved in the bustle of helping Mrs. Coleridge and the children out of the carriage, and advancing to the door to intimate their arrival. "Never before or since," he confesses, "can I reproach myself with having trembled at the approaching presence of any creature that is born of woman, excepting only, for once or twice in my life, woman herself." But he goes on:—"Through the little gate, I pressed forward; ten steps beyond it lay the principal door of the house. To this, no longer clearly conscious of my own feelings, I passed on rapidly; I heard a step, a voice, and, like a flash of lightning, I saw the figure emerge of a tallish man, who held out his hand, and saluted me with most cordial expressions of welcome." And so, Wordsworth passing him to advance and receive Mrs. Coleridge, he had time to observe the quaint beauty and simplicity of the cottage, with its one little diamond-paned window, and its shrubberies and profusion of roses, before he was ushered into the family parlour—somewhat dark through the luxuriance of the vegetation round the window, but not so much as to prevent his seeing two ladies who had just apparently entered it. We must give his impressions of them in his own words:—

"The foremost, a tall young woman, with the most winning expression upon her features that I had ever beheld, made a slight curtsy, and advanced to me, presenting her hand with so frank an air that all embarrassment must have fled in a moment before the native goodness of her manner. This was Mrs. Wordsworth. She was now mother of two children, a son and a daughter; and she furnished a remarkable proof how possible it is for a woman, neither handsome nor even comely, according to the rigour of criticism—nay, gene-

rally pronounced very plain—to exercise all the practical power and fascination of beauty, through the more compensatory charms of sweetness all but angelic, of simplicity the most entire, womanly self-respect and purity of heart speaking through all her looks, acts, and movements. Immediately behind her, moved a lady much shorter, much slighter, and perhaps in all other respects as different from her in personal characteristics as could have been wished, for the most effective contrast. ‘Her face was of Egyptian brown’—rarely, in a woman of English birth, had I seen a more determinate gipsy tan. The eyes were not soft, as Mrs. Wordsworth’s, nor were they fierce or bold; but they were wild and startling, and hurried in their nature. Her manner was warm, even ardent; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep; and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within her, which, being alternately pushed forward into a conspicuous expression by the irresistible instincts of her temperament, and then immediately checked, in obedience to the decorum of her sex and age and her maidenly condition (for she had rejected all offers of marriage, out of pure sisterly regard to her brother and his children), gave to her whole demeanour and to her conversation an air of embarrassment and even of self-conflict, that was sometimes distressing to witness. This was Miss Wordsworth, the only sister of the poet—his ‘Dorothy’—who naturally owed so much to the lifelong intercourse with her great brother, in his most solitary and sequestered years; but, on the other hand, to whom he has acknowledged obligations of the profoundest nature; and, in particular, this weighty one, through which we also, the admirers and the worshippers through every age of this great poet, are become equally her debtors—that whereas the intellect of Wordsworth was, by its original tendencies, too stern—too austere—too much enamoured of an ascetic harsh sublimity; she it was—the lady who paced by his side continually through sylvan and mountain-tracks, in Highland glens, and in the dim recesses of German charcoal-burners—that first *couched*

his eye to the sense of beauty—humanised him by the gentler charities, and engrafted, with her delicate female touch, those graces upon the ruder growths of his nature which have since clothed the forest of his genius with a foliage corresponding in loveliness and beauty to the strength of its boughs and the massiveness of its trunks.”

On the third morning after their arrival in Grasmere, De Quincey found all the family prepared for an expedition across the mountains. A common farmer's cart was brought to the door. “Such a vehicle I had never seen used for such a purpose,” says De Quincey; “but what was good enough for the Wordsworths was good enough for me: and, accordingly, we were all carted to the little town, or large village of Ambleside—three and a half miles distant. Our style of travelling occasioned no astonishment,” he says; “on the contrary, we met a smiling salutation wherever we appeared — Miss Wordsworth being, as I observed, the person most familiarly known of our party, and the one who took upon herself the whole expenses of the flying colloquies exchanged with stragglers on the road.” From Ambleside, over the famous ascent of Kirkstone; then down by Brother's Water to the Vale of Patterdale, they proceeded, reaching the inn there by moonlight; and, taking fresh horses in the morning, they passed by the margin of Ulleswater. Leaving Mrs. Coleridge and the children to the sole occupancy of the ‘carriage’ at Ewsmere, Wordsworth and De Quincey walked on in a leisurely way to Penrith, through the woods of Lowther; and on that evening Wordsworth read to De Quincey the “White Doe of Rylstone,” “an incident ever memorable to me,” as he says. On the next day De Quincey reached Greta Hall; Wordsworth, as he had to make a slight diversion to do some business, having left him to pursue the last stage of his journey alone. “It was about seven o'clock when I reached Southey's door,” says De Quincey; “for I had stopped to dine at a little public-house in Threlkeld, and had walked slowly for the last two hours in the dark. The arrival of a stranger

occasioned a little sensation in the house; and by the time the front door could be opened, I saw Mrs. Coleridge and a gentleman of very striking appearance, whom I could not doubt to be Southey, standing to greet my entrance."





CHAPTER IX.

IN BRISTOL—THE GIFT TO COLERIDGE.

DE QUINCEY'S stay in the Lakes could not at this time have been prolonged, for we find him in the early autumn back at Bristol, where he was paying a visit to some friends in the neighbourhood. This visit to Bristol is memorable, too, because it was then he learned Coleridge was so embarrassed in circumstances that his studies were materially impeded, and offered to yield substantial aid by presenting Coleridge with the sum of £500—more than a tenth part of his whole patrimony. It was Mr. Joseph Cottle, the well-known publisher of Bristol, to whose reminiscences the student of literature turns for many facts about the "Lake poets," who was the recipient of De Quincey's confidences and the medium of his generous gift. As the transaction, from first to last, so decisively testifies to the gratitude and devotion felt by De Quincey towards the poets, to whom he ever acknowledged the deepest obligations, we must give Mr. Cottle's own account of it,—the more that it reveals the great delicacy of De Quincey's mind, and indirectly may be taken to show that his account of his visit to Wordsworth's house, and his shy retreat from it without seeing the master, is quite worthy of credit. Whatever differences may have afterwards arisen between two of the parties, De Quincey's behaviour at this stage is likely to be viewed

by practical men and women as being at least as romantic and improbable as the other. Cottle, writing of the autumn of 1807, says:—

"I received a note from a lady, an old friend, begging permission to introduce to me a clever young man of her acquaintance, whom she even so honoured as to call 'a little John Henderson,' concerning whom this young man wished to make inquiries. An invitation immediately followed, and the lady introduced to me young Mr. de Quincey. Several interviews followed, each exhibiting his talents in a more favourable view, till I was satisfied he would either shine in literature, or, with steady perseverance, acquire eminence in either of the professions.

"He made inquiries respecting John Henderson, of whose learning and surprising attainments he had heard much. After conversing long on this subject, Mr. de Quincey asked me if I knew anything of Mr. Coleridge's pecuniary affairs. I replied, 'I am afraid he is a legitimate son of genius.' He asked if I thought he would accept a hundred or two pounds. I answered, I could not tell, but that I expected shortly to see him, when, if he seriously desired to learn, I would ascertain what the state of his finances was, and let him know. This, he said, was his particular wish.

"When Mr. Coleridge called on me . . . I asked him concerning his circumstances. He confessed that he had some present difficulties, which oppressed his mind. He said that all the money he had received from his office in Malta, as secretary to Sir Alexander Ball, had been expended in Italy and on his way home. I then told him that a young man of fortune, who admired his talents, had inquired of me if I thought he would accept a present of a hundred or two pounds; 'and I now ask you,' said I, 'that question, that I may return an answer.' Mr. Coleridge rose from his seat. He appeared much oppressed and agitated, and, after a short silence, he turned to me and said: 'Cottle, I will write to you. We will change the subject.' The next day I received from Mr. Coleridge the following letter:—

"MY DEAR COTTLE,—Independent of letter-writing

and a dinner engagement with C. Danvers, I was the whole of yesterday till evening in a most wretched restlessness of body and limbs, having imprudently discontinued some medicines, which are now my anchor of hope. This morning I dedicate to certain distant calls on Drs. Beddoes and Colston at Clifton,—not so much for the calls themselves, as for the necessity of taking brisk exercise.

“‘But no unforeseen accident intervening, I shall spend the evening with you from seven o’clock.

“‘I will now express my sentiments on the important subject communicated to you. I need not say it has been the cause of serious meditation. Undoubtedly calamities have so thickened on me for the last two years, that the pecuniary pressures of the moment are the only serious obstacles at present to my completion of those works which, if completed, would make me easy. Besides these, I have reason for belief that a Tragedy of mine will be brought on the stage this season, the result of which is, of course, only one of the possibilities of life, on which I am not fool enough to calculate.

“‘Finally, therefore, if you know that my unknown benefactor is in such circumstances that, in doing what he offers to do, he transgresses no duty of morals or of prudence, and does not do that from feelings which after-reflection might perhaps discountenance, I shall gratefully accept it as an unconditional loan which I trust I shall be able to restore at the close of two years. This, however, I shall be able to know at the expiration of one year, and shall then beg to know the name of my benefactor, which I should then only feel delight in knowing, when I could present to him some substantial proof that I have employed the tranquillity of mind which his kindness has enabled me to enjoy in sincere desires to benefit my fellow-men. May God bless you! S. T. C.’

“‘Soon after the receipt of this letter (on my invitation) Mr. de Quincey called on me. I said, ‘I understood from Mr. Coleridge himself that he laboured under embarrassments.’ ‘Then,’ said he, ‘I will give him five

hundred pounds.' 'Are you serious?' I said. He replied, 'I am.' I then inquired, 'Are you of age?' He said, 'I am.' I then asked, 'Can you afford it?' He answered, 'I can,' and continued, 'I shall not feel it.' I paused. 'Well,' I said, 'I can know nothing of your circumstances, but from your own statement, and, not doubting its accuracy, I am willing to become an agent in any way you prescribe.' Mr. de Quincey then said, 'I authorise you to ask Mr. Coleridge if he will accept from a gentleman who admires his genius the sum of five hundred pounds; but remember,' he continued, 'I absolutely prohibit you from naming to him the source whence it was derived.' I remarked, 'To the latter part of your injunction, if you require it, I will accede, but although I am deeply interested in Mr. Coleridge's welfare, yet a spirit of equity compels me to recommend you in the first instance to present Mr. Coleridge with a smaller sum, which, if you see right, you can at any time augment.' Mr. de Quincey then replied, 'Three hundred pounds I *will* give him, and you will oblige me by making this offer of mine to Mr. Coleridge.' I replied, 'I will.' I then gave him Mr. Coleridge's letter, requesting him to put it in his pocket, and read it at his leisure. Soon after, I received the following communication from Mr. de Quincey:—

"MY DEAR SIR,—I will write for the three hundred pounds to-morrow. I am not able to say anything further at present, but will endeavour to call on you in a day or two. I am, very sincerely, and with many thanks for your trouble in this affair,—Yours,

'THOMAS DE QUINCEY.'

"In a day or two Mr. de Quincey enclosed me the three hundred pounds, when I received from Mr. Coleridge the following receipt, which I still retain:—

"'November 12, 1807.—Received from Mr. Joseph Cottle the sum of three hundred pounds, presented to me, through him, by an unknown friend.

"'Bristol.

S. T. COLERIDGE.'

"I have been thus particular in detailing the whole of this affair, so honourable to Mr. de Quincey; and, as I was the communicating agent, I thought it right, on this occasion, to give publicity to the transaction on the principle of doing justice to all. Notwithstanding the prohibition, some indirect notices from myself could have left no doubt with Mr. Coleridge of the source of this handsome gift."

This, let it be particularly noted, is Cottle's account of the whole transaction; it has become a part of literary history, else it should not have been referred to here, notwithstanding that it indicates such a generosity as may be taken to excuse, if not to justify, much to which unsympathetic minds may easily give their own colour. Recklessly to part with money if interesting persons or objects that *are* deserving present themselves is not a course to be recommended in an unqualified way in these days of charity organisation and general social reform; but there are so very few who are likely to follow so bad an example (in a worldly point of view), and to run the risk of exposing themselves ere long to want or privation, that we can afford rather to admire so exceptional a type of character.*

It is singular to remark, also, that a little before this time (1807) Mr. Coleridge had written to his friend, Mr. Wade, a melancholy letter, detailing his embarrassed circumstances; so that Mr. de Quincey's £300 must have been received at an acceptable time.

Another proof of generous interest in all strugglers after intellectual position is almost incidentally afforded us in Mr. Cottle's record. The John Henderson referred to was a young man, the son of a bookseller, who, in face of the greatest hardships, had fought his way to distinction at Oxford, where his remarkable talents soon caused him to be sought after even by persons who were

* De Quincey himself never made any reference, public or private, to his timely benefaction, till long after it was well known through Cottle, and even then it was in the most reserved and general terms—speaking in *Tait's Magazine*, in 1834, of a particular service he had tried to do the poet. (See Appendix.)

not likely to be much moved by the trials of an ordinary student. Henderson, by a remarkable coincidence, had occupied the same rooms at Pembroke College as Dr. Samuel Johnson had done ; and in much he gave token of repeating that great man's history ; but he was early called away, and has left behind him but the shadowy report of great possibilities. Mr. Cottle tells us in a little sketch, added as an appendix to his volume of poems, that Henderson's mind awakened at two years of age, that his memory was most remarkable, and that he was a great linguist. Having met Dr. Tucker, Dean of Gloucester, in a stage-coach, that dignitary was so struck by Henderson's conversation, that he wrote to his father suggesting that he should go to the university, and supplemented his advice by offering £200. Henderson was benevolent as well as gifted. When the epidemic fever raged at Oxford he visited the poorest and helped them ; and when his means were exhausted, he sold his Polyglot Bible to obtain further means of aid. He was visited by Johnson and Burke, who left him surprised, instead of disappointed—an undoubted prodigy. It was quite the kind of history to awaken De Quincey's interest ; and to make inquiries about Henderson seems to have been the chief purpose of his first visit to Cottle. The term "little John Henderson" used by Cottle's lady correspondent—not improbably Mrs. Hannah More—was certainly not inapt, but it must have referred to disparity of personal appearance rather than of intellectual power.

As establishing what has been indicated on an earlier page as to the relations between De Quincey and his uncle, Colonel Penson, the following letter may be given here :—

"SAHARUNPOOR, *January 12th, 1808.*

"MY DEAR SIR,—I have received your kind and manly letter too many months back to think of without shame. Rest assured I shall not invade the independence you desire to maintain. Indeed, you have better security than my word, for my poverty will keep me

from assaulting you unless a stronger necessity than at present exists should occur, and I sincerely hope no such necessity will ever occur to you. Dr. Johnson, I think, says, If I were any man's most bitter enemy, I should wish him to be reduced to the necessity of borrowing money. I am much obliged to you for the pamphlets, and for the kind offer of supplying me with books. My reading is much too desultory to admit of anything like definition. Indeed, having few books of my own, I am glad to read any that I can pick up worth the trouble of reading. If you should be able to pick up on any of the stalls of Oxford or London De Foe's account of the Plague in 1665 or 1666, I shall be obliged if you will buy it for me, or even 'The Cavalier,' which your mother tells me was likewise written by De Foe—though I can hardly think it—I shall be glad to have. Should you ever meet with a book called either 'The Epitome of the Harleian Miscellany,' or 'Extracts from the Harleian Miscellany,' one vol. very large quarto, not thick, I shall be obliged if you will buy it and make it a present to your mother from me. For these and any other purchases you may make for me I must insist on your indenting on my funds in your mother's hands. Are you acquainted with my friend Mr. Salmond? If you are not, I wish you would call on him when you have an opportunity. I shall enclose this to him, that he may have an opportunity of letting you know where he may be found. You will find him a man of strong sense, and a perfect gentleman in his manners, with one of the gentlest and kindest natures I ever met with. I have just got to the extremity of Hindostan, under the great chain of snowy mountains that extend from the Caspian to the confines of China. They are the most majestic sight I ever looked upon. There are views of them in England by the Daniels, which will give you a much clearer conception of them than any description I can give from a distant view of them. There was a letter written by the Court of Directors, and approved by all but one of their number, which was suppressed, or rather kept

back, by the Board of Control, which throws great light on Mr. Francis' speeches. It is published in the form of a pamphlet, and titled, 'Copy of a Proposed Despatch to the Bengal Government, approved by twenty-three Directors, dated 3rd April 1805. R. Wilks, printer, Chancery Lane.' And I am told there is either another suppressed despatch published since, or else a remonstrance of the C. of D. on the suppression of the first. I have not seen this last, but am told it elucidates affairs in this quarter very considerably. There is so much danger of letters being intercepted, that few people care to write upon politics lest their letters should be published; by which means England is much in the dark on Indian affairs. I conclude Administration is very well pleased with the rod Bonaparte held over us in the East. They can by this means tell what they like and as they like. Put no more letters among the books; yours and Jane's were so much mildewed I had great difficulty in reading them. Remember me most affectionately to your mother, brothers, and sisters. May God bless you in this world, and most especially by a knowledge of Himself in the world to come. This is a knowledge I have only lately come at, and I find it full of peace.—I am, dear sir, ever affectionately yours,
T. P."

We can infer from this letter that De Quincey's interest in India, which remained keen to the end, was thus early stimulated by his correspondence with his uncle.





CHAPTER X.

IN LONDON AND BACK IN GRASMERE.

DE QUINCEY returned to Oxford for a short time; but spent the earlier part of 1808 in London, where he had frequent opportunities of seeing Coleridge, and once more had it in his power to render him service. Coleridge at that time lived at the office of the *Courier* in the Strand; Mr. Daniel Stewart, one of the proprietors of that paper, and an intimate friend of Coleridge's, having given up to him for a time the use of some rooms there. "In such a situation, annoyed by the sound of feet passing his chamber-door continually to the printing-rooms of this great establishment, and with no gentle ministrations of female hands to sustain his cheerfulness, naturally enough his spirits flagged. . . . I called upon him daily," says De Quincey, "and pitied his forlorn condition." Yet in spite of his circumstances, and the many deprivations they involved, not a few of the great and the high in rank were to be found making calls on the distressed philosopher. "There," says De Quincey, "I met Sir Humphrey Davy. Nowhere before or since have I seen a man who so felicitously caught the fascinating tone of high-bred urbanity, which distinguishes the better part of the British nobility." Lamb and Hazlitt and Goodwin, too, with others, made their way to Coleridge's rickety chambers at the *Courier* office; so

that here "high-thinking" and courtly-breeding combined with "plain-living," unless indeed it might be in the "divine luxury" of opium, which Coleridge surely did not share with many of his guests.

De Quincey at this time had rooms at 82 Great Titchfield Street, but afterwards resided with a college companion, Mr. Richard Smith, in Mary-le-bone. We find record of his keen concern in public matters in the following letter to Mr. Kelsall—"the state of things in Manchester" doubtless referring to the riot between the masters and the weavers on May 24 and 25, which was quelled by the military:—

"5 NORTHUMBERLAND STREET, MARY-LE-BONE,

June 15, 1808.

"DEAR SIR,—I must trouble you to send me £30 to this place. If you have time to add a few lines on the real state of things in Manchester, in which all here feel great interest from the newspaper accounts, I shall be much obliged to you.

"I beg my kind respects to Mrs. Kelsall, and love to the children; and am, dear sir, your affectionate friend,

"THOS. DE QUINCEY."

The following letter to his sister, then at Sidmouth, tells its own tale:—

"5 NORTHUMBERLAND STREET, MARY-LE-BONE,

June 20th, 1808.

"MY DEAR SISTER,—The Bible, I found, could not be finished in the time prescribed; but I ordered it, nevertheless, since I can send it or bring it to Sidmouth, or anywhere else, as Miss Brotherton directs. On further examination, it seems to me a very excellent Bible both for use and appearance. It has marginal references (as I think your Christmas letter directed). I gave the fullest directions for the binding, as that it should have an open back (which I suppose you forgot to mention),

ribbons, &c., and that he must be frugal in his gilding, with which the binders absolutely yellow-wash books that they mean to make fine. I summed up or perorated by impressing on his misguided mind that it was to be 'simply elegant' or 'chastely magnificent,' if he could understand those words; and if he could not, he was to take as his analogical *model* (or bright ideal) my coat; *i.e.*, that as my coat was to the ephemeral generations of coats, so was the binding to be in relation to all tawdry bindings; for that my coat, having lost its juvenile graces, had reached that tone of sober majesty, that *je ne sais quoi* of interesting fragility, which carried the mind of the spectator back to past ages, and to the contemplation of permanence amidst the revolutions of human affairs, &c., which was precisely the thing sought in a binding for any book that was to look massive and monumental, and anti-fugitive, and more like an inheritance than a purchase. The price, I find, will be six guineas, exclusive of the silver clasps, of which the binder cannot tell the price, some other trade or mystery claiming that part of the work.

"Mr. Coleridge was greatly pleased to hear that my mother meant to be in Devonshire this summer, as he will himself be within five miles of Sidmouth in about a week (reckoning from his *own* dates); and as he will have the use of his friend Stewart's carriage (if Stewart stays), will be able to visit you without difficulty. Coleridge left London about six days ago with Mr. Stewart on a visit into Kent. This day week he lectured at the Institution, and had his pocket picked of the main part of his lecture as he walked from the Strand; but, having notes, he managed to get through very well.

"My friend Smith having gone down to Oxford for a fortnight, you must direct here, if you please, for the future. I am solicited to stay in London in order to be present at his marriage, which takes place on his return; but I suppose it is necessary to sport some gay things on such occasions (silk coat, perhaps, and cocked hat), isn't it? If so, I must abscond; though, as I am inti-

mate with all parties, there will be some difficulty in that. The lady is a very extraordinary lady—nothing less than a female Crichton—painter, harpist, pianist, linguist; and her youngest sister one of the greatest beauties in England—both unaffected, wild-hearted girls. Pray counsel me on this disagreeable joyful occasion.

“If you or Jane (to whom I desire my love, promising a full answer to all her letters in a very short time) want a guinea’s worth of books for a shilling, I’m your agent, at a reasonable percentage.

“Give my love to my mother, and kind remembrances to Miss Brotherton and Miss Gee.*

“Believe me, my dear sister, ever your most affectionate brother,

“THOS. DE QUINCEY.”

De Quincey spent the latter portion of the year 1808 at Oxford, and towards its close returned to Grasmere. He remained under Wordsworth’s roof till February 1809, having made arrangements for a permanent settlement there by taking a lease of the cottage which Wordsworth had quitted a short time before. He now spent some months visiting friends and wandering aimlessly in Somersetshire, went back for a few weeks to Westmoreland, and then turned his steps to London. It was during his stay here that he performed for Wordsworth the service of seeing his pamphlet, “The Convention of Cintra,” through the press. He agreed with Wordsworth in the main on this great question, which was then stirring Europe; and instead of devoting his whole time in London, with wise forecast, to the endeavour to open up avenues for himself to communicate to the world some of his many ideas, as more practical and less devotedly friendly spirits might have done, he

* A family of Gees were second cousins of De Quincey; the head of the family, Mr. Gee, a banker at Boston in Lincolnshire, being one of his guardians: the letter “G” of the “Autobiographic Sketches”—which was practically inactive through distance from the family.

patiently revised and edited Wordsworth's pamphlet, adding an appendix, which the author declared was "done in a most masterly manner."

In a budget of Wordsworth's letters we find a comparatively large number bearing on this "Convention of Cintra" pamphlet, attesting the care with which De Quincey had done his work. Wordsworth is surprised at the felicity of some of the emendations; all, he says, are improvements. Miss Wordsworth writes:—"Soon you must have rest, and we shall all be thankful. You have indeed been a treasure to us while you have been in London, having spared my brother so much anxiety and care. We are very grateful to you." And Wordsworth himself hopes that De Quincey may soon be at Grasmere, where he may think of the pamphlet labours in quiet, "as a traveller thinks of a disagreeable journey which he has performed, and will not have to repeat."

De Quincey's visits to London in these years, 1808-9, and afterwards, had for their chief object his "keeping terms" with a view to being called to the Bar. It was not at all likely that he would find legal studies much to his taste, notwithstanding that he had keen dialectic faculties that might have been educated in this direction. Writing of his visits to Lamb in 1804-5, he says, "Lamb lived in the Temple then; and I, who was not then, as I afterwards became, a student and member of the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple, did not know much of the localities."

Meanwhile Miss Wordsworth was active in setting the cottage in order, as she had undertaken to do. We have many records in the letters before us of her zeal and untiring interest in discussion of the most desirable colours in carpets and curtains, and of the best styles of furniture. She finds a good reason for preferring mahogany to deal for book-shelves in the consideration "that native woods are dear; and that in case De Quincey should leave the country, and have a sale, no sort of wood sells so well at second-hand as mahogany." Thoughtful, careful, discreet Dorothy!

But she is not content to write a letter merely on such domestic details as these. She enlivens her letters by the introduction of more liberal interests, as this will show :—

“The weather is now very delightful, and it is quite a pleasure to us to go down to the old spot, and linger about as if we were again at home there. The garden looks fresh, and very pretty, in spite of the cruel injury done to the trees by Atkinson’s unruly axe. If you had not been quite so happy in the enjoyment of a beautiful country and the society of your own family, we should have much regretted your absence. Yesterday I sat half-an-hour musing by myself in the moss-hut, and for the first time this season I heard the cuckoo there. The little birds too, our old companions, I could have fancied were glad that we were come back again ; for it seemed I had never before seen them so joyous on the branches of the naked apple-trees.

“Pleasant indeed it is to think of that little orchard which for over seven years at least will be a secure covert for the birds, and undisturbed by the woodman’s axe. There is no other spot which we may have prized year after year that we can ever look back upon without apprehension that next year, next month, or even to-morrow, it may be deformed or ravaged. You have walked to Rydal, under Nab Scar? Surely you have? If not, it will be for ever to be regretted, as there is not anywhere in the country such a scene of ancient trees and rocks as you might have there beheld—trees of centuries’ growth inrooted among and overhanging the mighty crags. These trees, you would have thought, could have had no enemy to contend with but the mountain-winds, for they seemed to set all human avarice at defiance ; and, indeed, if the owners had had no other passion but avarice, they might have remained till the last stump was mouldered away ; but malice has done the work, and the trees are levelled. A hundred labourers, more or less, men, women, and children, have been employed for more than a week in hewing, &c., and the mountain echoes with the riotous sound of their voices.

You must know that these trees upon the Nab Scar grow on unenclosed ground, and Mr. North claims the right of lopping and topping them—a right which Lady Fleming, as Lady of the manor, claims also. Now, Mr. North allows (with everybody else) that she has a right to fell the trees themselves, and he only claims the boughs. Accordingly he sent one or two workmen to lop some of the trees on Nab Scar. Lady Fleming's steward forbade him to go on; and in consequence he offered five shillings per day to any labourers who would go and work for him. At the same time Lady Fleming's steward procured all the labourers he could, also at great wages, and the opposite parties have had a sort of warfare upon the crags,—Mr. North's men seizing the finest trees to lop off the branches and drag them upon Mr. North's ground; and Lady Fleming's men being also in an equal hurry to choose the very finest, which they felled with the branches on their heads to prevent Mr. North from getting them; and, not content with this, they felled those also which Mr. North has been beforehand with them in lopping, to prevent him from receiving any benefit from them in future. Oh, my dear friend, is not this an impious strife? Can we call it by a milder name? I cannot express how deeply we have been affected by the loss of the trees (many and many a happy hour have we passed under their shade), but we have been more troubled to think that such wicked passions should have been let loose among them. The profits of the wood will not pay the expenses of the workmen on either side!!! A lawsuit will no doubt be the consequence, and I hope that both parties will have to pay severely for their folly, malice, and other bad feelings."

In every way the honest expression of the feelings of a true lover of nature and poet.

Between Dorothy Wordsworth and De Quincey it is clear that a great liking sprang up—a relation of sympathy and mutual appreciation and friendly aid; so that to Dorothy, after this time, was delegated the chief burden of correspondence; and on her at a later time,

as we shall see, fell the whole burden of friendly association and helpfulness.

Returning to Westmoreland in November of 1809, "At last," De Quincey says, "I, the long-expected, made my appearance. Some little sensation did really and naturally attend my coming, for most of the draperies belonging to beds, curtains, &c., had been sewed by the young women of that or the adjoining vales; and this had caused me to be talked of."

And so he entered on the occupation of the little cottage, which henceforth for a quarter-of-a-century was to be closely identified with his name, after having "been hallowed, to my mind, by the seven years' occupation of that illustrious tenant [Wordsworth], during perhaps the happiest period of his life—the early years of his marriage and of the first acquaintance with parental affections."

"Cottage immortal in my remembrance!" he exclaims; "as well it might be, for this cottage I retained through just seven-and-twenty years: this was the scene of struggles the most tempestuous and bitter within my own mind: this the scene of my despondency and unhappiness: this the scene of my happiness,—a happiness which justified the faith of man's *earthly* lot as upon the whole a dowry from heaven! It was, in its exterior, not so much a picturesque cottage—for its outlines and proportions, its windows and its chimneys, were not sufficiently marked and effective for the picturesque—as it was lovely: one gable-end was, indeed, most gorgeously appavelled in ivy, and so far picturesque; but the principal side, or what might be called the front, as it presented itself to the road and was most illuminated by windows, was embowered—nay, it may be said, smothered—in roses of different species, amongst which the moss and the damask prevailed. These, together with as much jasmine and honeysuckle as could find room to flourish, were not only in themselves a most interesting garniture for a humble cottage wall, but they also performed the acceptable service of breaking the unpleasant glare that would else have wounded the eye,

from the whitewash,—a glare which, having been renewed amongst the general preparations against my coming to inhabit the house, could not be sufficiently subdued in tone for the artist's eye until the storms of several winters had weather-stained and tamed down its brilliancy. . . . It was very irregular in its outline to the rear, by the aid of one little projecting room, and also of a stable and little barn in immediate contact with the dwelling-house. It had, besides, the great advantage of a varying height, two sides being about fifteen or sixteen feet high from the exposure of both stories; whereas the other two, being swathed about by a little orchard that rose rapidly and unequally towards the vast mountain range in the rear, exposed only the upper story; and, consequently, on those sides the elevation rarely rose beyond seven or eight feet."

And so we see De Quincey settled in Grasmere with friends scattered round him not far off; all the repose of home seems to be about him—to be perfected perhaps ere long.

In his English Note-books, we find Nathaniel Hawthorne saying, in a description of a tour in Westmoreland:—

"We passed The Nab, in which De Quincey formerly lived, and where Hartley Coleridge lived and died. It is a small, buff-tinted, plastered stone cottage, I should think of a very humble class originally; but it now looks as if persons of taste might some time or other have sat down in it, and caused flowers to spring up about it. It is very agreeably situated under the great precipitous hill, and with Rydal Water close at hand, on the other side of the road."

This, however, refers to the house possessed by Mr. Simpson, who afterwards became De Quincey's father-in-law. De Quincey only occupied it for some time in later years, when the increase of the family and the vast increase of books rendered necessary greater accommodation than was to be found in the cottage at Townend, which remained the real headquarters so long as he was in Grasmere. We mention this here to explain references to The Nab which will soon occur.



CHAPTER XI.

SETTLEMENT AT GRASMERE.

THE influences which had drawn De Quincey to Grasmere soon widened out, showing a far-reaching horizon. For not only did he find the valley conducive to meditation, fed as this meditation was by daily society with Wordsworth, but he became the friend and confidant of Wordsworth's children, whose attractions finally outdid those even of their father's philosophy.

Over and above the happy conditions due to natural influences, he was thrown into a society singularly fitted to furnish the qualifying effects he most required in social intercourse. It was here that he first met Professor Wilson ; here that he seemed to gain back a part of himself in Charles Lloyd ; here that he got to know Southey and many others ; on whom, if we must regretfully say it, he was thrown more and more as he was gradually repelled from Wordsworth.

It must not be supposed, however, that any real rupture took place between Wordsworth and De Quincey. A lengthened correspondence shows that, in spite of a certain lack of social sympathy in Wordsworth, realised by De Quincey at an early period, they remained for many years on such terms of friendship as was consistent with the exchange of mutual good offices, and various letters, which shall be referred to at the proper places, will suffice to attest this.

For a time De Quincey had been a guest of Wordsworth at Allan Bank. He appears to have been a favourite with the whole family, entering so readily into all their projects and joys and sorrows, that he was more like a brother than aught else. For nearly a couple of years, at all events, after his settlement in Grasmere he was almost a daily visitor at Wordsworth's. During the latter part of the year 1809 and the greater part of 1810 Coleridge was a guest there; and it could hardly be but that his presence operated as a mutually attractive medium. We have this note of one of Coleridge's propensities at that time, proceeding out of his habit of accumulating volumes whether at home, with friends, or with strangers:—

“The next opportunity I had of seeing Coleridge was at the Lakes, in the winter of 1809, and up to the autumn of the following year. During this period it was that he carried on the original publication of *The Friend*; and for much the greater part of the time I saw him daily. He lived as a visitor in the house occupied by Mr. Wordsworth [Allan Bank], barely one mile from my own cottage, where I had a considerable library. Many of the books being German, Coleridge borrowed them in great numbers. Having a general licence from me to use them as he would, he was in the habit of accumulating them so largely at Allan Bank, that sometimes as many as five hundred were absent at once: which I mention, in order to notice a practice of Coleridge's, indicating his very scrupulous honour in what regarded the rights of ownership. Literary people are not always so strict in respecting property of this description; and I know more than one celebrated man, who professes, as a maxim, that he holds it no duty of honour to restore a borrowed book; not to speak of many less celebrated persons, who without openly professing such a principle do, however, in fact, exhibit a lax morality in such cases. The more honourable it is to Coleridge, who had means so trifling of buying books for himself, that, to prevent my flocks from mixing and being confounded with the flocks already folded at Allan

Bank (his own and Wordsworth's), or rather that they *might* mix without danger, he duly inscribed my name in the blank leaves of every volume ; a fact which became rather painfully known to me ; for, as he had chosen to dub me *Esquire*, many years after this, it cost myself and a female friend some weeks of labour to hunt out these multitudinous memorials, and to erase this heraldic addition ; which else had the appearance to a stranger of having been conferred by myself."

As Wordsworth's attraction for De Quincey gradually waned, that of the children at Allan Bank grew ; and many are the bright suggestive pictures of them we have met with. They were always in his thoughts. Every one of Miss Wordsworth's letters shows the hold he had on their hearts. When Johnny comes from school she tells how his mother said to him, "Here is a letter from"—"From Mr. de Quincey," he replied ; and how, with his own ingenuous blush and smile, he came forward to the fireside with a quicker pace, and asked her to read the letter ; how, when all was over, he said, "But when will he come ? Maybe he'll tell us in his next letter ;" and how, when he has finished his prayers, in which he makes a petition for his good friends, he says, "Mr. de Quincey is one of my friends." Little "Tom," too, she tells, often lisps out his name, and will rejoice with the happiest at his return,—when he comes with the black hat he has bought for Johnny, as promised, and the carriage he has got for Johnny and Sissy, though that proposal brings a protest from Miss Wordsworth, who seriously grieves that so much money should be expended for a carriage for them when they are completely happy and satisfied with their own, which answers every purpose of the other, though it is hard to pull uphill, but that, thinks Miss Wordsworth, makes it "the better exercise for them."

Of the little Catherine Wordsworth, whose touching death added another to the mystic persons of De Quincey's dream-world, he is able to tell us that, "while yet a mere infant, she noticed me more than any other person, excepting, of course, her mother." De Quincey's

love of children was intense, and his power of pleasing and amusing them something astonishing in a man, in many respects, so secluded and self-involved. And there were other children of whom he was passionately fond, those of Charles Lloyd, for example, whose house in later years became for him a centre of sad and joyous memories. It was at Lloyd's house that De Quincey first saw Professor Wilson, and this is how he speaks of that circumstance, which needs fullest celebration in any memoir of the English opium-eater; their friendship not only yielding much to literature, but remaining to the end unbroken, more tender and brother-like, indeed, at the end than at its opening:—

“When I first knew them, Low Brathay [the residence of Lloyd] was distinguished above every other house at the head of Windermere, or within ten miles of that neighbourhood, by the judicious assortment of its dinner-parties, and the gaiety of its *soirées dansantes*. These parties were never crowded; poor Lloyd rarely danced himself; but it gladdened his benevolent heart to see the young and blooming floating through the mazes of the dances then fashionable, whilst he sat by looking on, at times with pleasure, from his sympathy with the pleasure of others; at times pursuing some animated discussion with a literary friend; at times lapsing into profound reverie. At some of these dances it was that I first saw Wilson of Elleray (Professor Wilson), in circumstances of animation and buoyant with youthful spirits, under the excitement of lights, wine, and above all, of female company. He, by the way, was the best male dancer (not professional) I have ever seen; and this advantage he owed entirely to the extraordinary strength of his foot in all its parts, to its peculiarly happy conformation, and to the accuracy of his ear; for as to instruction, I have often understood from his family that he never had any. Here also danced the future wife of Professor Wilson, Miss Jane Penny, at that time the leading belle of the Lake country.”

The two, however, did not get acquainted then—as, indeed, there might have been some incongruity in

the idea of two philosophers becking and bowing to each other in the pauses of a quadrille—that was, perhaps fitly, reserved for Wordsworth and Wordsworth's house; and this is the account of it, given with all De Quincey's circumstantial precision and subdued *naïveté*.—

“My introduction to him—setting apart the introducee himself—was memorable from one circumstance—viz., the person of the introducer. William Wordsworth it was, who in the Vale of Grasmere, if it can interest you to know the place, and in the latter end of 1808, if you can be supposed to care about the time, did me the favour of making me known to John Wilson, or, as I might say (upon the Scottish fashion of designating men from their territorial pretensions), to Elleray. I remember the whole scene as circumstantially as if it had been yesterday. In the Vale of Grasmere—that peerless little vale, which you and Gray the poet and so many others have joined in admiring as the very Eden of English beauty, peace, and pastoral solitude—you may possibly recall, even from that flying glimpse you had of it, a modern house called Allan Bank, standing under a low screen of woody rocks which descend from the hill of Silver How, on the western side of the lake. This house had been recently built by a worthy merchant of Liverpool; but for some reason of no importance to you or me, not being immediately wanted for the family of the owner, had been let for a term of three years to Mr. Wordsworth. At the time I speak of, both Mr. Coleridge and myself were on a visit to Mr. Wordsworth; and one room on the ground-floor, designed for a breakfasting-room, which commands a sublime view of the three mountains—Fairfield, Arthur's Chair, and Seat Sandal (the first of them within about 400 feet of the highest mountains in Great Britain)—was then occupied by Mr. Coleridge as a study. On this particular day, the sun having only just set, it naturally happened that Mr. Coleridge—whose nightly vigils were long—had not yet come down to breakfast; meantime, and until the epoch of the Coleridgean break-

fast should arrive, his study was lawfully disposable to profaner uses. Here, therefore, it was, that, opening the door hastily in quest of a book, I found seated, and in earnest conversation, two gentlemen: one of them my host, Mr. Wordsworth, at that time about thirty-eight years old; the other was a younger man by good sixteen or seventeen years, in a sailor's dress, manifestly in robust health, *fervidus juvena*, and wearing upon his countenance a powerful expression of ardour and animated intelligence, mixed with much good nature. 'Mr. Wilson of Elleray'—delivered as the formula of introduction, in the deep tones of Mr. Wordsworth—at once banished the momentary surprise I felt on finding a stranger where I had expected nobody, and substituted a surprise of another kind: I now well understood who it was that I saw; and there was no wonder in his being at Allan Bank, Elleray standing within nine miles; but (as usually happens in such cases) I felt a shock of surprise on seeing a person so little corresponding to the one I had at first half-consciously prefigured. . . . Figure to yourself a tall man about six feet high, within half an inch or so, built with tolerable appearance of strength; but at the date of my description (that is, in the very spring-tide and bloom of youth), wearing, for the predominant character of his person, lightness and agility, or (in our Westmoreland phrase) *lishness*, he seemed framed with an express view to gymnastic exercises of every sort. . . . Ask in one of your public libraries for that little quarto edition of the 'Rhetorical Works of Cicero,' edited by Schutz (the same who edited 'Æschylus'), and you will there see (as a frontispiece to the first volume) a reduced whole-length of Cicero from the antique, which in the mouth and chin, and indeed generally, if I do not greatly forget, will give you a lively representation of the contour and expression of Professor Wilson's face. . . . Of all this array of personal features, however, I then saw nothing at all, my attention being altogether occupied with Mr. Wilson's conversation and demeanour, which were in the highest degree agreeable; the points which chiefly

struck me being the humility and gravity with which he spoke of himself, his large expansion of heart, and a certain air of noble frankness which overspread everything he said; he seemed to have an intense enjoyment of life; indeed, being young, rich, healthy, and full of intellectual activity, it could not be very wonderful that he should feel happy and pleased with himself and others; but it was somewhat unusual to find that so rare an assemblage of endowments had communicated no tinge of arrogance to his manner, or at all disturbed the general temperance of his mind."

Elsewhere, and with some indescribable savour of humorous reserve, De Quincey refers to those early escapades of Wilson's amongst gypsies and Bohemians of the lower order:—

"And, although a man of prudence cannot altogether approve of his throwing himself into the convivial society of gypsies, tinkers, potters (*i.e.*, earthenware sellers), strolling players, &c., nevertheless it tells altogether in favour of Professor Wilson's generosity of mind, that he was ever ready to forego his advantages of station and birth, and to throw himself fearlessly upon his own native powers as man opposed to man."

Mrs. Gordon, in her admirable memoir of her father, thus refers to the origin of the friendship so begun between Wilson and De Quincey and its genuine unbroken character:—

"Strange to say, they had when at Oxford remained unknown to each other; but here, attracted by the same influence, a mutual friendship was not long in being formed, which endured—independent of years of separation and many caprices of fortune—till death divided them. The graces of nature with which De Quincey was endowed fascinated my father, as they did every mind that came within the sphere of his extraordinary power in the days of his mental vigour. . . . From 1809, when he was his companion in pedestrian rambles and the sharer of his purse, till the hour of his death, that friendship remained unbroken, though sometimes, in his strange career, months or years would elapse without

my father either seeing or hearing from him. If this singular man's life were to be written truthfully no one would believe it, so strange the tale would seem. . . . He, indeed, knew how to analyse the human heart through all its deep windings, but he offered no key of access to his own. In manner no man was more courteous or naturally dignified ; the strange vicissitudes of his life had given him a presence of mind which never deserted him, even in positions the most trying. It was this quality that gave him, in combination with his remarkable powers of persuasion, command over all minds ; the ignorant were silenced by awe, and the refined fascinated as by the spell of a serpent. . . . Wilson loved him to the last, and better than any man he understood him. In the expansiveness of his own heart, he made allowances for faults which experience taught him were the growth of circumstance. It may seem strange that men so opposite in character were allied to each other by the bonds of friendship ; but I think that all experience shows that sympathy, not similarity, draws men to one another in that sacred relation. . . . Many were the pleasant days spent by these friends together ; many the joyous excursions among the hills and valleys of the Lake country. One memorable gathering is still remembered in the lone places of the mountains, and spoken of to the stranger wandering there. One lovely summer-day, in the year 1809, the solitudes of Eskdale were invaded by what seemed a little army of anglers. It consisted of thirty-two persons, ten of whom were servants brought to look after the tents and baggage necessary for a week's sojourn in the mountains. This camp, with its furniture, was carried by twelve ponies. Among the gentlemen of the party were Wilson, Wordsworth, De Quincey, Alex. Blair, two Messrs. Astley, Humphries, and some others whose names have escaped notice. After passing through Eskdale, and that solemn tract of country which opens upon Wastwater, they there pitched their tent, and roaming far and near from that point, each took his own way till evening hours assembled them together.

The beauty of the scenes through which they rambled, the fine weather, and, above all, that geniality of taste and disposition which had brought them together, made the occasion one of unforgotten satisfaction. It formed the theme of one of Wilson's most beautiful minor poems, entitled 'The Angler's Tent,' which was written soon after at Elleray, where Wordsworth was then living."

In the beginning of 1809 Wilson took an excursion into Scotland, and asked De Quincey to accompany him in this letter:—

"MY DEAR DE QUINCEY,—I am obliged to leave this to-morrow for Glasgow. I therefore trouble you with this note, in case you should think of coming over during my absence. I expect to return to Elleray in a few days; yet there is an uncertainty attending every motion of mine, and possibly of yours also. If you are ready for a start, I will go with you to-morrow on foot through Kentmere and Hawesdale to Penrith, and on Monday you can easily return by Ulleswater to Grasmere. The fine weather may induce you. If you feel a wish to look at Glasgow and Edinburgh, would you take a trip with me on the top of the coach? I will pledge myself to return with you within eight days. If so, or if you will agree to the first plan only, my pony or horse is with my servant who carries this, and you can come here upon it. I hope you will do so. There is no occasion for a wardrobe. I take nothing with me, and we can get a change of linen. The expense will be small to us.—Yours ever affectionately,

"JOHN WILSON.

"ELLERAY, *Saturday*, 1809."

To the proposal that De Quincey should accompany him through Kentmere and Hawesdale to Penrith—one of the most delightful of pedestrian journeys—Mrs. Gordon appends this note:—

"The proposal to walk over so much ground proclaims De Quincey to have been no weak pedestrian. Although he was a man considerably under height and

slender of form, he was capable of undergoing great fatigue, and took constant exercise. The very fact of his being a walking companion of Wilson speaks well for his strength, which was not infrequently taxed when such a tryst was kept. Perhaps, in later years, of the two men he preserved his activity more entire."

De Quincey, however, was unable to go to Scotland at this time, owing to his having arranged to spend a part of the summer in Somersetshire. But the two friends had already begun to project bolder enterprises, in which, perhaps, they found as deep a pleasure as if they had been able actually to carry them into practice—the more that the thought of them remained unsullied by the shadows of such drawbacks as are so apt to mix themselves with the memories of pilgrimages really performed. De Quincey tells us that Professor Wilson had even planned a journey into Central Africa, the objects of which should be to visit the city of Timbuctoo, and solve (if possible) the great outstanding problem of the source of the Niger. This enterprise being found more than impracticable, it had to yield to other adventurous projects (for it was more the love of adventure than interest in geographical discovery by which Wilson was impelled), and in one of these De Quincey was associated. On September 12, 1809, we find Wilson thus writing to De Quincey at Bristol from Elleray:—

"MY DEAR DE QUINCEY,—I write you a few lines to make a proposal which I hope you will not think unwarranted by the short acquaintance we have had with each other. I intend going to Spain in a few weeks, to traverse as great a part of it as circumstances may allow; and knowing the deep interest you take in the destiny of the Spaniards, I have thought of communicating to you my design. Mr. Wordsworth, who, with his wife, is now staying at Elleray, has strongly recommended to me to write you on this subject. My plan is to go by packet to Lisbon early in October. My stay in the Peninsula will on no account exceed six months. An

immediate answer will gratify me. Should you enter into this scheme, I will either meet you in London at the time you mention or remain here till you come down. In hopes that you will determine to go, believe me most sincerely and respectfully yours, JOHN WILSON."

De Quincey, in spite of his dreaminess and devotion to study, not only loved long walks, but had a keen interest in certain kinds of sport, which his residence in Grasmere put it in his power fully to gratify, without his doing despite to the other demands of his temperament. He even took to long wanderings with Ritson, a genuine old Laker, referred to by Christopher North as a famous wrestler, who had won many a county belt. This Ritson had once thrown Wilson twice out of three falls, confessing, however, that he found his opponent "a varra bad un to lick," as well he might, seeing that in running he was beaten by Wilson, who could jump twelve yards in three jumps, with a heavy stone in each hand, while Ritson could only manage eleven and three-quarters.

In all these matters Wilson found in De Quincey an interested friend, who, if he was not himself of sufficient physique to become a competitor, had a place in his memory for curious facts bearing upon them, and could bring these forward fresh and *apropos*, making his classical studies occasionally yield the most original and surprising commentaries. But the peculiar vein of meditative self-seclusion, erratic sympathy, and dreamy, overcharged sentiment demanded its own peculiar stimulant. Therefore we hear of other rambles, taken under other circumstances, with contrasted accompaniment:—

"I took the very greatest delight in nocturnal walks through the silent valleys of Cumberland and Westmoreland. What I liked in this solitary rambling was, to trace the course of the evening through its household hieroglyphics from the windows which I passed or saw; to see the blazing fires shining through the windows of the houses, lurking in nooks far apart from neighbours; sometimes in solitudes that seemed abandoned to the

owl, to catch the sounds of household mirth; then, some miles farther, to perceive the time of going to bed; then the gradual sinking to silence of the house; then the drowsy reign of the cricket; at intervals to hear church-clocks or a little solitary chapel-bell, under the brow of mighty hills, proclaiming the hours of the night, and flinging out their sullen knells over the graves where the 'rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep'—where the strength and the loveliness of Elizabeth's time, or Cromwell's, and through so many fleeting generations that have succeeded, had long ago sunk to rest. Such was the sort of pleasure which I reaped in my nightly walks—of which, however, considering the suspicions of lunacy which it sometimes awoke, the less I say, perhaps, the better."

Of a kindred character, but striking a still deeper chord of sensibilities, leaving a more distinct impress on the phantasy as suggesting far more of the pathetic wonder and mystery of life—is the record we have of his sorrow at the death of Catherine Wordsworth, and his unique experiences arising out of it. Miss Wordsworth, in her letter intimating to De Quincey the sudden death of his favourite from convulsions, tells him that little Catherine "never forgot Quincey."

"Dear innocent!" she proceeds, "she now lies upon her mother's bed, a perfect image of peace. This to me was a soothing spectacle after having beheld her struggles. The fit, which came on at a quarter before ten or half-past nine o'clock, continued till a quarter after five in the morning, when she breathed her last. She had been in perfect health, and looked unusually well; her leg and arm had gained strength, and we were full of hope. In short, we had sent the most delightful accounts to her poor mother. It is a great addition to our afflictions that her father and mother were not here to see her in the last happy weeks of her short life. It is an unspeakable consolation to us that we are assured that no foresight could have prevented the disease in this last instance, and that it was not occasioned by any negligence or improper food. The

disease lay in the brain; and if it had been possible for her to recover, it is much to be feared that she would not have retained the faculties of her mind. We have written to my brother, and he will proceed immediately into Wales to impart the sad intelligence to my sister. You will be pleased to hear that Mary Dawson * has been very kind in her attentions to us."

This letter was immediately answered by a request for further particulars; and we find De Quincey writing again to Miss Wordsworth on June 21st as follows—his mind concentrated on little Kate and all things associated with her:—

"Sunday Evening, June 21st.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I thank you much for your long and most affecting letter. One passage troubled me greatly; I mean when you speak of our dear child's bodily sufferings. Her father and I trusted that she had been insensible to pain—that being generally the case, as I believe, in convulsions. But thank God! whatever were her sufferings, they were short in comparison of what she would have had in most other complaints; and now at least, sweet love! she is at rest and in peace. It being God's pleasure to recall His innocent creature to Himself, perhaps in no other way could it have been done more mercifully to her, though to the bystanders for the time few could be more terrible to behold. How much more suffering would she have had in a common fever from a cold; and what anguish to us all if she had called upon our names in delirium, and fancied that we would not come to her relief! This I remember witnessing at my father's bedside on the morning when he died. I was but a child, and had seen too little of my father to have much love for him; but I remember being greatly affected at hearing him moan out to my mother a few minutes before he died, 'O Eliza, Eliza! why will you never come and help me to raise this great weight?'

* De Quincey's servant in charge of his cottage.

"I was truly glad to find from your account of her funeral, that those who attended were in general such as would more or less unaffectedly partake in your sorrow. It has been an awful employment to me the recollecting where I was and how occupied when this solemn scene was going on. At that time I must have been in the streets of London; tired, I remember, for I had just recovered from sickness—but cheerful, and filled with pleasant thoughts. Ah! what a mortal revulsion of heart if any sudden revelation should have laid open to my sight what scene was passing in Grasmere Vale! On the night June 3rd-4th, I remember, from a particular circumstance which happened in the room below me, that I lay awake all night long in serious thought, but yet as cheerful as if not a dream were troubling any one that I loved. As well as I recollect, I must have been closing my eyes in sleep just about the time that my blessed Kate was closing hers for ever! Oh that I might have died for her or with her! Willingly, my dear friend, I would have done this. I do not say it from any sudden burst of anguish, but as a feeling that I have ejaculated in truth and sincerity a thousand times since I heard of her death. If I had seen her in pain I could have done anything for her; and reason it was that I should, for she was a blessing to *me*, and gave me many and many an hour of happy thoughts that I can never have again.

"You tell me to think of her with tender cheerfulness; but, far from that, dear friend, my heart grows heavier and heavier every day. More and more of her words, and looks, and actions keep coming up before me; and there is nobody to whom I can speak about her. I have struggled with this dejection as much as I can; twice I have passed the evening with Mr. Coleridge, and I have every day attempted to study. But after all I find it more tolerable to me to let my thoughts take their natural course, than to put such constraint upon them. But let me not trouble you with complaints, who have sorrow enough to bear of your own, and to witness in others.

"Yesterday I heard from Mr. Wordsworth, and was grieved to hear of Mrs. Wordsworth's state of mind; but I knew that it could not be otherwise. She would have borne her loss better, I doubt not, if she had been on the spot. As it is, this great affliction would come upon her just when her mind would be busiest about thoughts of returning to her children. I think of her often with the greatest love and compassion.

"This afternoon I was putting my clothing and books into the trunk. Whilst I was about it, I remembered that it was the 21st of June, and must therefore be exactly a quarter of a year since I left Grasmere; for I left it on Sunday, March 22d, this day thirteen weeks; therefore I saw Kate for the last time. The last words which she said to me (except that perhaps she might call out some words of farewell in company with the rest who were present) I think were these:—The children were speaking to me altogether, and I was saying one thing to one and another to another, and she, who could not speak loud enough to overpower the other voices, had got up on a chair, and putting her hand upon my mouth, she said, with her sweet importunateness of action and voice, 'Kinsey! Kinsey! what a bring Katy from London?' I believe she said it twice; and I remember that her mother noticed the earnestness and intelligence of her manner, and looked at me and smiled. This was the last time that I heard her sweet voice distinctly, and I shall never hear one like it again! God bless you, my dear friend.—Ever yours,

T. DE QUINCEY.

"*N.B.*—Mary Dawson would surely suppose that, as a mark of respect to your family, I should wish her to get mourning at my expense. If she has not done this, pray tell her that I particularly desire it may be done. I forgot to mention it before.

"I shall leave London not earlier than Tuesday, nor later than Wednesday. I have been detained in a way that I could not prevent. How soon I get to Grasmere

will depend on the accidents of meeting conveyances, &c. I trust I shall find you all well.

"I wrote a second letter to you last Monday, June 15th."

In Richard Woodhouse's notes there is reference to an anticipatory intimation to De Quincey's mind of this death by the howling of a dog. The effect was so vivid on De Quincey's sensations, that he at once mentioned the matter to Mr. Taylor, and began to consider which of all the persons he knew and loved might most probably be in trouble or dying. He waited anxiously, and in due time came the letter sealed with black from Miss Wordsworth which we have given above.*

The paralysis which deprived little Kate of the use of one of her sides was due to the fall for which the girl Green was blamable.

De Quincey's grief and helpless prostration are described by him in his most characteristic manner by way of giving full effect to his dream-delusions:—

"Over and above my excess of love for her, I had always viewed her as an impersonation of the dawn and the spirit of infancy; and this abstraction seated in her person, together with the visionary sort of connection which even in her parting hours she assumed with the summer sun, by turning her immersion into the cloud of death with the rising and the setting of that fountain of life—these combined impressions recoiled so violently into a contrast or polar antithesis to the image of death, that each exalted and heightened the other. I returned hastily to Grasmere." He tells us that he now abandoned himself to his grief, and often spent the night on her grave, "not, as may readily be supposed," he says, "in any parade of grief; on the contrary, in that quiet valley of simple shepherds, I was secure enough from observation, until morning light began to return; but in mere intensity of sick, frantic yearning after neighbourhood to the darling of my heart. Many

* See Dr. Richard Garnett's edition of the "Confessions."

readers will have seen in Sir Walter Scott's 'Demonology,' and in Dr. Abercrombie's 'Inquiries concerning the Intellectual Powers,' some remarkable illustrations of the creative faculties awakened in the eye or other organs by peculiar states of passion; and it is worthy of a place amongst cases of the kind, that in many solitary fields, at a considerable elevation above the level of the valleys—fields, which in the local dialect are called 'intacks'—my eye was haunted at times, in broad noonday (oftener, however, in the afternoon), with a facility, but at times with a necessity, for weaving out of a few simple elements a perfect picture of little Kate in the attitude and onward motion of walking. I resorted constantly to these 'intacks,' as places where I was little liable to disturbance; and usually I saw her at the opposite side of the field, which might sometimes be at a distance of a quarter-of-a-mile, generally not so much. Almost always she carried a basket on her head; and usually the first hint upon which the figure arose commenced in wild plants, such as tall ferns or the purple flowers of the foxglove; but whatever might be the colours of the forms, uniformly the same little full-formed figure arose, uniformly dressed in the little blue bedgown and black skirt of Westmoreland, and uniformly with the air of advancing motion. Throughout part of June, July, and part of August, in fact, throughout the summer, this frenzy of grief continued." It passed from him suddenly, with a nervous sensation of sickness.

Not long afterwards he received in a letter from Wordsworth the news of another bereavement—the close of the letter being most tender and touching in its simplicity of pathos.

The following letter addressed by De Quincey to his sister shows the friendly terms on which at this time he stood with Southey, and is quoted here chiefly because of the reference to the death of Thomas Wordsworth:—

"GRASMERE, *Sunday Night, January 3rd, 1813.*

"MY DEAR SISTER,—Your letter having lain some

days at the post, and James having come round by London, they did not reach me so soon as you may have calculated. I wrote to Coleridge by last Friday morning's post, begging him to forward, under cover to Westhay, whatever letters he could furnish for Sicily and Malta. By the time this reaches you, therefore, you will possibly have heard from him. Southey, in a note which I had from him last night, says : 'It was in the year 1801 that I last left Lisbon ; and time and revolution have cut down and broken up and scattered the society in which I lived and with which I was connected. I can, however, procure letters for Mr. Leeves, which shall be franked to him from London as soon as you let me know where they are to be addressed. I should fear that he may wait long at the "storm-vexed Bermudas" before he finds a passage to Lisbon. The voyage, however, is his best chance.' Of course I shall write to Southey this night desiring him to have them sent to you. Through the family at Gale House I have applied also to Mr. Koster of Liverpool ; he was one of the best English residents of Lisbon. Whatever letters he may send are expected at Ambleside to-night or to-morrow night. By the first post after their arrival (we have only four in a week) I will forward them to Southey. At all events, I will write again by next Monday morning's post (the first after the one I now write by), and enclose a letter to the ambassador at Constantinople, which will be very useful, if he should go so far ; and as he means to sail about from place to place, most probably he will. I felt great concern on hearing of his illness, and hope heartily that he may find benefit from his voyages. Kindly assure him of my most friendly remembrance and best wishes for his speedy re-establishment.

"I have now, with sadness of heart, to inform you that dear little Thomas Wordsworth died of the measles on Tuesday the first of last month. He was seized with them the Thursday before, and had none but favourable symptoms until about eleven o'clock on the Tuesday morning ; after which he grew rapidly worse, and died about

five in the evening. I was met at Liverpool, on my road home, by a letter from Wordsworth written the same night to inform me of this event, in which he writes:—

“‘His sufferings were short, and I think not severe. Pray come to us as soon as you can. My sister is not at home. Mrs. W. bears her loss with striking fortitude, and Miss Hutchison is as well as can be expected. My sister will be here to-morrow.

“‘Most tenderly and lovingly, with heavy sorrow for you, my dear friend, I remain yours,

‘W. WORDSWORTH.’

“Unfortunately I did not receive this letter till the very night of his funeral, which (though I loved him tenderly, dear child!) I was thus unable to attend.”

The Mr. Leeves referred to above was a clergyman, chaplain to the embassy at Constantinople, a son of the Rector of Wrington, in the Mendip Hills, well known as the composer of the modern air to “Auld Robin Gray.”

In Charles Lloyd, as has been said, De Quincey found, perhaps, more of an answering quality in the deeper veins of sentiment than in any other of his Grasmere friends. Indeed, the impression gathered from De Quincey’s picture of Lloyd gives a far higher idea of him than we had gathered from his poems, though that, we need not say, was high. De Quincey himself expressly says, “Lloyd had other and higher accomplishments of intellect than he showed in his verses.” Lloyd had been reared a Quaker, after a strict fashion even for a Quaker; and the repression in youth of the natural gaiety and fervour of his nature had reacted injuriously, and had precipitated a tendency to lunacy, intensified by specific disease. It was a painful contest, a daily anxious watching and terror of certain tokens; but that the clouded life was beautiful and silver-streaked, De Quincey bears good witness.

“On his own account,” says De Quincey, “and for his personal qualities, he was worthy of a separate notice

in any biography, however sparing in its digressions; but, viewed in reference to his fortunes, among the most interesting men I have known. Never do I reflect upon his hard fate, and the bitter though mysterious persecution of body which pursued him, dogged him, and thickened as life advanced, but I feel gratitude to Heaven for my own exemption from suffering in that particular form; and in the midst of afflictions, of which two or three have been most hard to bear, because not unmingled with pangs of remorse for the share which I myself had in causing them—still, by comparison with the lot of Charles Lloyd, I acknowledge my own to have been happy and serene.”

He at last fell under the stroke; and one of the most melting passages we have ever read is the account we have of his rushing into De Quincey's cottage, when he had escaped from his confinement. De Quincey's casuistic discussion with himself as to his duty in the matter raises a smile whilst the eyes are yet moist.

In August 1813 we find him writing to the Wordsworths:—

“On Sunday last one of my sisters received a letter from my brother Richard, dated London. I believe you know that he is as restless as the sea; so you may guess our astonishment on learning that he had only just left Westmoreland. . . . In the way of news from Grasmere or its neighbourhood, his letter communicated nothing, except a very short and indistinct mention of Mr. Lloyd's illness in July: this gave us all great concern; but we collect, from the wording of it, that he had recovered before my brother left the North. If Grasmere can be considered a change of scene to Mr. Lloyd, I trust that you will not scruple to make use of my house; even if I come as early as I talk of, there is room (you know) for us all.

“The other night Mrs. Hannah More returned from a *progress* among her people in Cambridge, Huntingdonshire, and different parts of England, and (if you think *that* any honour) made very minute inquiry re-

specting Mr. Lloyd's pursuits, habits, and tastes. She told me that she had met the senior Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd at Mr. Galton's, I think, and had had a good deal of conversation with them.

"I have been twice in London since I saw you. On my last visit I saw a little of Coleridge; but during the latter part of my stay he would see nobody, not even Mrs. Morgan or her sister. He fancied that he had a fit of the gout coming on; and one day Mrs. Morgan told me that he had flung a note from the top of the stairs, to this effect, that the gout had already mounted to his stomach, and, if he were at all disturbed or agitated, would speedily attack the brain. It happened, however, on a night after this, when I had staid till past one o'clock with the two ladies, that they perceived a body of smoke turning the corner from Oxford Street into Berners Street, accompanied with a strong smell of burning. Coleridge was dressed and reading in his room; and on Mrs. Morgan knocking at his door, he instantly came out and tripped downstairs with her as lightly as ever."

Charles Lloyd died some years later in Paris, his mental faculties under a cloud.*

With Southey, owing to his excessive devotion to work, his somewhat stiff and uncongenial manners, De Quincey did not form so intimate a friendship as with these others. Their earliest intercourse was enough, however, to give Southey a very elevated idea of De Quincey's powers. In the end of 1810 we find him thus writing to Mr. Richman:—"Mathetes is not De Quincey, but a Mr. Wilson,—De Quincey is a singular man, but better informed than any person almost that I ever met at his age."

We find De Quincey, many years after this, recording his relations with Southey; in writing of his first settlement in the Lakes in 1808-9:—"Though, on various accounts, my intercourse with him was at no time very strict, partly from the very uncongenial constitution of

* See Macready's "*Reminiscences*," vol. i. pp. 164-166.

my own mind, and the different direction of my studies, partly from my reluctance to levy a tax on time so precious and so fully employed, I was yet on such terms for the next ten or eleven years that I might, in a qualified sense, call myself his friend."

Nature and human society alike had thus cast spells over him and linked him by a kind of fascination to the Valleys.

Owing to the failure of one of the houses of business in which a large portion of De Quincey's money had been invested, he was suddenly deprived of one of his sources of income, which accounts for the tenor of the following letter from his uncle, Colonel Penson, about this time:—

"MY DEAR SIR,—I have heard that your affairs are not prosperous, though of the nature or extent of your misfortunes I have no information. Yet, as it has pleased God to bless me beyond either hope or expectation since I left England, I feel that in requesting your acceptance of the enclosed I am not violating the spirit of the command you gave me when last I heard from you, either in 1806 or 1807; for I then was in truth as poor as need be, but the amendment of my affairs makes an entire change in all the circumstances and relations of life. Mr. Crittenden has sent the first of this bill, and I shall send the triplicate by some other conveyance.

"All is peace and still life here. Communication is only from the West; and our last accounts from Spain are very unpromising. Make my kind affections to all at Westhay, and believe me, my dear sir, yours most affectionately,

THOS. PENSON.

"FUTTYGHUR, NEAR FURRACKABAD, 16th July 1813."

In the years 1813-14 Wilson was chiefly in Edinburgh in connection with his profession at the Bar; but every available holiday he spent at Elleray, sometimes descending on his neighbours like a surprise. The footing on which he and De Quincey continued to stand was certainly of the most brotherly and uncere- monious kind. For example, on a certain Saturday in

the autumn of 1814 we found Wilson dining with William Curwen, and then walking to De Quincey's, which he reaches at half-past one on the Sunday morning.

"De Quincey was at the *Nab*," he says, "and when he returned about three o'clock, found me asleep in his bed." And we can well believe that De Quincey did not a whit overstep the fact when, in some letters written to a young American friend, he said:—

"I repeat, that my interest, as I flatter myself, would have opened the gates of Elleray to you even at midnight; for I am so old a friend of Mr. Wilson that I take a pride in supposing myself the oldest; and, barring relations by blood, arrogate the rights of dean in the chapter of his associates; or at least I know of but one person whose title can probably date earlier than mine. About this very month when I am writing, I have known Professor Wilson for a cycle of twenty years and more, which is just half of his life—and also half of mine; for we are almost *ad apicem* of the same age,—Wilson being born in May, and I in August, of the same memorable year."

During those earlier years at Grasmere he paid visits to friends in Bristol, in Somersetshire, and in London. Mrs. Hannah More, who, as we have seen, was an intimate friend of his mother, and had been drawn into a somewhat close intimacy with her by similarity of tastes and dogmatic beliefs, was always visited by De Quincey when he was staying with his mother at her house, Westhay, or with his mother's friends in that district.

At Hannah More's, he tells us, he met Mrs. Siddons in 1814, and in his "Autobiographic Sketches" he sets down his impressions of these two famous women.

In February 1814 we find Wordsworth writing to De Quincey during one of his visits to Somersetshire, consulting him about an added stanza in "*Laodamia*," which now appears in the poem, and ends with the fine line—

"While tears were thy best pastime—day and night,"

and requesting him to be more detailed in the expression of his opinion on certain poems and on the Preface than he had been,—his opinions, as it would appear, having been studiously general about the said Preface, and a request made for copies of the earlier draft of it. This leads Wordsworth to say, that he wished De Quincey had mentioned *why* he had desired the *rough* copies of the Preface to be kept, as the request had led him to apprehend that something therein might have appeared to be better or more clearly expressed than in the after-draft; adding, "I should have been glad to receive suggestions accordingly."





CHAPTER XII.

EDINBURGH.

WILSON, owing to the loss of his fortune through an uncle, had found it necessary to quit Ellera, and to betake himself seriously to the practice of his profession at the Scottish Bar. He made his mother's house in Edinburgh his home, and gathered round him, as was the necessity and the delight of his sociable nature, a "band of choice spirits." The literary society of Edinburgh in 1815 did not need to seek shelter under the great traditions left by its illustrious predecessors. Hume, Lord Kames, Fergusson, and Dugald Stewart had passed away, leaving a kind of radiant track behind them, out of which Jeffrey and Scott had already emerged, to assert an independent and individual light. But lesser clusters were forming, and that of which John Wilson now became the acknowledged centre was destined to grow broader in importance, and do something to sustain the intellectual credit of the "Modern Athens." We can well imagine that here the talk was of the wittiest and most brilliant, passing now and then into boisterous fun, liveliest repartee, and catching itself up again with subdued seriousness as some grave problem presented itself, or some new work of mark was brought upon the *tapis*. Wilson, genial, overflowing, yielding easily to the demand of the moment, would hold his own, as a good host ought. Anecdotes and stories, derived

from contact with gypsies and others during those early escapades of his, would doubtless bear their part; but widely read in poetry and *belles lettres* as he was, and with a retentive, if somewhat inexact, memory, he could mount the most refined pinnacles of criticism. Then there was Hamilton, darkly metaphysical, omnivorous of books; R. P. Gillies, rich with the spoils of extensive travel, full of the recent chit-chat of the higher circles, and proud of his correspondence with eminent persons—a sort of Scottish Crabb Robinson; Lockhart, cynical, reserved, and stately, but here, amongst congenial spirits, gratefully unbending; and William Allan—yet to be Sir William—staid, conciliatory, a grand listener, yet sometimes unostentatiously turning the conversation to the field in which he was specially interested. It was into this society that De Quincey, in the end of 1814, came like a man dropped from the moon. Wilson, writing to Edinburgh under date October 31, 1814, says:—"De Quincey will accompany me to Scotland; but I will write about his rooms in a day or two." They did not at first know well what to make of this man with the boyish figure and the gentle voice, who, with quiet, unassuming deliverance, speedily asserted a kind of right to say the final word, and who soon became a referee in knotty points of philosophy or scholarship—even Hamilton assenting. He was—at any rate for a time—a puzzle, a paradox, a source of bewilderment, and they could not have done talking about him. He became a kind of literary lion, and was persecuted with invitations to dine out here, there, everywhere. All felt that a new influence was at work in their midst, and they enjoyed it. This new-comer, who could cap Hamilton's most recondite quotations from Plato and Plotinus, from Kant or Richter, or rectify on the spur of the moment the least lapse in a line cited from Euripides or Pindar, was worthy of study and of deference, both of which were so loyally yielded him that De Quincey ever afterwards felt a love for Edinburgh, as for a second *alma mater*. His odd habits, too, had their own attraction, and surrounded him with something of mystic glamour. He was then



John Wilson

PROFESSOR WILSON ("CHRISTOPHER NORTH.")

NOW EXPRESSLY ENGRAVED FROM THE ORIGINAL DAQUERREOTYPE IN THE
POSSESSION OF MR. JOHN HOGG, TAKEN ABOUT 1850.

[To face page 138.]

in that stage of opium-eating which may be regarded as a swift advance to the climax; but as yet, at all events, his constitution and mental faculties seemed to be strengthened instead of impaired by it. He was still in the stage of simple, gratified energies; and all agree that his talk, on emerging from his slumber, was *sui generis*. Wilson would invite night-parties, we are told, so that De Quincey, who was at the best in the early hours, might be seen and heard to full advantage.

De Quincey himself thus tells of the company, of which he cherished grateful recollections to the end:—

“The original nucleus had been John Wilson (i.e., the Wilson) and his brothers, amongst whom the naturalist (James Wilson) was known to me first, and subsequently Sir William Hamilton. Next, and after the war had finally reached its consummation in Waterloo—a *peripetieia* as perfect and dramatic as ever was exhibited on the stage of Athens—others at intervals gladdened our festive company, amongst whom, as the most memorable, I ought to mention Colonel Mitchell, the biographer of Wallenstein, so advantageously known by his bold and original views upon strategies, upon the efficacy of the bayonet, and upon the critical interpretation of some chapters in martial history; Captain Thomas Hamilton, the brother of Sir William, an accomplished man, latterly known among us by the name of Cyril Thornton, from the title of his novel; Sir William Allan, the distinguished artist, afterwards President of the Royal Scottish Academy; and lastly, Mr. R. P. Gillies, the advocate, whose name I repeat with a sigh of inexpressible sadness, such as belongs of right to some splendid Timon of Athens, so often as, on the one hand, I revivify to my mind his gay saloons, resonant with music and festive laughter,—the abode for years of a munificent hospitality, which Wordsworth characterises as ‘all but princely,’—and, on the other hand, shudder at the mighty shadows of calamity, of sorrow, of malice, of detraction, that have for thirty years stalked after his retreating splendour, and long since have swallowed up the very memory of his pretensions from the children of this generation.”

In his "Reminiscences of a Literary Veteran," a work of singular interest, alike on account of its anecdotes of distinguished personages and the glimpses it gives us into an original and penetrating mind—a work which certainly deserves to be raised out of the forgetfulness into which it has fallen—we find Mr. Gillies recording his impressions of De Quincey, and thus concluding:—

"The talk might be of 'beeves,' and he could grapple with them, if expected to do so, but his musical cadences were not in keeping with such work, and in a few minutes (not without some strictly logical sequence) he could escape at will from the beeves to butterflies, and thence to the soul's immortality, to Plato, and Kant, and Schelling, and Fichte, to Milton's early years and Shakespeare's sonnets, to Wordsworth and Coleridge, to Homer and Æschylus, to St. Thomas of Aquin, St. Basil, and St. Chrysostom. But he by no means excluded them from real life, according to his own views of that life, but would recount profound mysteries from his own experiences—visions that had come over him in his loneliest walks among the mountains, and passages within his own personal knowledge, illustrating, if not proving, the doctrines of dreams, of warnings, of second-sight and mesmerism. And whatever the subject might be, every one of his sentences (or of his chapters, I might say) was woven into the most perfect logical texture, and uttered in a tone of sustained melody.

"Such power and acquirements could not fail to excite wonder in Edinburgh. He had indeed studied 'all such books as are never read,' in that enlightened capital, and was the first friend I had ever met who could profess to have a command over the German language, and who consequently was able (*ex cathedra*) to corroborate my notions of the great stores that were contained therein. I flatter myself that he found our house not altogether uncongenial, as he was kind enough to visit there more frequently than in any other."

This visit to Edinburgh, which lasted for some months,

can only be reckoned as an interesting interlude, claiming notice here in a special way, because no doubt the friendships and associations now formed had a powerful influence, and, later, determined De Quincey's course at what may be ranked as a turning-point in his life.





CHAPTER XIII.

GRASMERE, AND MARRIAGE.

IN April 1816 we find Wordsworth writing to R. P. Gillies: "Mr. de Quincey has taken a fit of solitude: I have scarcely seen him since Mr. Wilson left us." Taking this in connection with some other significant circumstances, we can infer that the presence of Wilson had become a kind of necessary uniting medium between Wordsworth and De Quincey, and that now, his presence being withdrawn, the two had shown some tendency to fall coldly apart from each other. We can easily imagine that the consciousness of this would be depressing to De Quincey. In Mr. J. R. Findlay's "Recollections," under date, March 2, 1855, we read:—

"Talking of Wordsworth's 'Guide to the Lakes,' De Quincey said that on its original publication he offered an account of the origin and character of the Language of the Lake District, which unlocked all its peculiar nomenclature; but Wordsworth, who never liked to be obliged to anybody for anything, declined it in his usual haughty and discourteous manner, and it was ultimately published in a Kendal newspaper." Mr. Findlay adds in a footnote: "No doubt in the *Westmorland Gazette*, of which De Quincey was himself editor in 1819." That it was the *Westmorland Gazette* is certain. The present writer read it there; and in *Titan*—the continuator

of *Hogg's Instructor*—De Quincey plainly says so in a letter to the editor on the Lake Dialect, which he demonstrates, in opposition to various writers, to have a Danish base, giving as one illustration a little incident of Westmoreland rustic life. He paints the picture of a child catching sight of a stranger, and running frightened towards its mother at the door, when he heard her say to it coaxingly, "Come its ways, then, and get its *patten*," *patten* being really Danish for breast.

But other and more urgent interests had arisen to modify in some measure such painful feelings as the repulsion from Wordsworth would cause, simply by the powerful preoccupations of fear and hope. De Quincey has himself told us in his "Confessions" how, though he had intermittently used opium during the eight years between 1804 and 1812, he had felt no ill effects from it. "Hitherto," he says, "I have been only a dilettante eater of opium; eight years' practice even, with the single precaution of allowing sufficient intervals between every indulgence, has not been sufficient to make opium necessary to me as an article of daily diet." But in 1813 the irritation in the stomach which had arisen as one of the effects of those months of starvation in London now recurred with such intensity, that he was led, for mitigation, greatly to increase the quantity taken. His dose had risen to 340 grains of opium, or 8000 drops of laudanum, per day—a formidable figure, though we learn that it is only a little more than half what Coleridge was taking about the same time. He resolved to conquer the habit, and was fortified by a new inducement. He was engaged to be married. Accordingly, as detailed in the "Confessions," he reduced his daily dose from 340 grains to forty. Instantaneously, and as if by magic, he says, the cloud of profoundest melancholy, which had rested on his brain, drew off: once again he was happy; his brain performed its functions as healthily as ever; he read Kant and understood him. But he had been too sanguine; not yet realising fully the insidious and powerful hold such a drug obtains, nor laying weight enough on the necessity for a carefully graduated reduction and

the strictest attention to exercise, so as to prevent strong reactions, which are more dangerous than aught else. This plan was now more systematically applied, and with such appearance of success as to justify him in assuming the responsibilities of marriage in the end of 1816. Mrs. Baird Smith has kindly supplied the following account of her mother :—

“Mrs. de Quincey, whose maiden name was Margaret Simpson, was the daughter of a Westmoreland ‘statesman,’*—that is, if I understand rightly, a farmer whose family had farmed the same land for generations; this land, as I believe, being held by some special service. Her father was a man of a reserved, massive, upright character, who in his long days, and sometimes nights, of solitary work had made his own a good deal of the best literature of the country, as some of his grandchildren found long after, while trying to lighten the sleepless nights of his old age, when a chance word would loose his reserve, and this silent man would find it most easy to express himself by words from the Bible, Milton, Shakespeare, Pope’s ‘Homer,’ and sometimes a whole ‘Spectator,’ humorous or grave, as the exciting subject might have been, and all in the homely, kindly Westmoreland dialect, which in no way spoiled the recitation to our ears. From him, no doubt, my mother inherited intellectual tastes; but she was married so early—when she was only eighteen—that my father himself probably helped to guide her to the larger interests which make his few touching references to her fall so far short of all she was to him by her sympathy with his many-sided mind. Delicate health and family cares made her early withdraw from society, but she seems to have had a powerful fascination for the few friends she admitted to intimacy, from an old charwoman who used to threaten us, as though it were guilt on our part, ‘Ye’ll ne’er be the gallant woman yer mither was,’ to a friend who had seen society in all the principal cities of Europe, and who,

* Modified from *Estatesman*, and should in strict propriety be written ‘*Statesman*—one himself farming a small patrimonial estate.

with no reason for exaggeration, has told us he had never seen a more gracious or a more beautiful lady than our mother."

Though De Quincey speaks prior to 1813 of years "set, as it were, and insulated in the gloom and cloudy melancholy of opium," he can still regard himself as having been on the whole a happy man till the middle of the year 1817. That and the succeeding year, 1818, find him overmastered by the enemy, shut as into a cave of Trophonius. The Circean spell seemed to have been laid upon him more effectually than ever. He describes these years as unfolding an Iliad of woes in the "Pains of Opium." His faculties were as though bound up in chains of frost. He shrank from mathematics and intellectual philosophy with a sense of infantile feebleness. He could not read what demanded any effort and sustained thought. A great philosophical work which he had begun, and which was to be called after Spinoza's "*De Emendatione Humani Intellectûs*," was helplessly abandoned. He seldom could prevail on himself to write a letter; an answer of a few words to any he received was all that he could accomplish, and often not that until the letters had lain for weeks or even months on his table. In the midst of this grievous prostration his wife read to him poetry and other things, and in the beginning of 1819 a friend sent from Edinburgh a copy of Ricardo's book on Political Economy, which acted like a charm. Once more he found he could read. "Recurring to my own prophetic anticipation of the advent of some legislator for this science, I said, before I had finished the first chapter, 'Thou art the man!' Wonder and curiosity were emotions that had long been dead in me. Yet I wondered once more; I wondered at myself that I could once more be stimulated to the effort of reading; and much more I wondered at the book." But it did more; it roused him to active effort—"to write, or, at least, to dictate what M. wrote for me. It seemed to me that some important truths had escaped even 'the inevitable eye' of Mr. Ricardo; and as these were for the most part of such a nature that I could express or

illustrate them more briefly and elegantly by algebraic symbols than in the usual clumsy and loitering diction of economists, the whole would not have filled a pocket-book; and being so brief, with M. for my amanuensis, even at this time, incapable as I was of all general exertion, I drew up my 'Prolegomena of all Future Systems of Political Economy.' "

This exertion, however, was but a temporary flash. Though a part of the work was actually printed, it had to be laid aside, as once more the old habit prevailed, and the gloomy shadows again gathered round. Now came the terror and the strife—the sense of sinking as if into unmeasured depths, under the weight of twenty Atlantics; the darkness being painted with a never-ceasing procession of awful pictures, in which the dreams and the agonies of youth were mixed in inextricable confusion with stories woven out of classic or oriental reminiscence. "When I lay in bed, vast processions passed along in mournful pomp; friezes of never-ending stories, that to my feelings were as sad and solemn as if they were drawn from the times before *Œdipus* or *Priam*—before *Tyre*—before *Memphis*." Sleep and waking became alike, in the prevailing sense of sunless gloom, and unsounded abysses, out of which there seemed no hope of rising; while space and time alike became boundless, infinite.

In a hitherto unpublished writing* we read of this period:—"At length I grew afraid to sleep; and I shrank from it as from the most savage tortures. Often I fought with my own drowsiness, and kept it aloof by sitting up the whole night and following day. Sometimes I lay down only in the daytime, and sought to charm away the phantoms by requesting my family to sit round me and to talk, hoping thus to draw an influence from what externally affected me into my internal world of shadows; but, far from that, I infected and stained, as it were, the whole of my waking experience with the feelings derived from sleep. I seemed

* That is, at date of first edition, 1877.

indeed to live, and to converse, even when awake, with my visionary companions much more than with the realities of life. 'Oh, what do you see, dear? what is it that you see?' was the constant exclamation of M. by which I was awakened as soon as I had fallen asleep (though to me it seemed as if I had slept for years). My groans had, it seems, awakened her; and, from her account, they had commenced immediately on my falling asleep."

Then, as he tells us in the "Confessions," "I sometimes seemed to have lived for seventy or a hundred years in one night; nay, sometimes had feelings representative of a millennium passed in that time. . . . In the earlier stages of my malady, the splendours of my dreams were chiefly architectural; and I beheld such pomps of cities and palaces as were never yet beheld by the waking eye, unless in the clouds. . . . To my architecture succeeded dreams of lakes and silvery expanses of water. But by-and-by the waters changed their character—from translucent lakes, shining like mirrors, they now became seas and oceans. And now came a tremendous change, which, unfolding itself slowly, like a scroll, through many months, promised an abiding torment; and, in fact, it never left me until the winding-up of my case. Hitherto the human face had mixed often in my dreams, but not despotically, nor with any special power of tormenting. But now that which I have called the tyranny of the human face began to unfold itself. Perhaps some part of my London life might be answerable for this. Be that as it may, now it was that upon the rocking waters of the ocean the human face began to appear: the sea seemed to be paved with innumerable faces, upturned to the heavens; faces, imploring, wrathful, despairing, surged up by thousands, by myriads, by generations, by centuries: my agitation was infinite,—my mind tossed and surged with the ocean."

Hitherto the terrors had been solely those of the mind, but together with deepening oriental extravagance there came the sense of physical horrors, in-

expressible. Ugly birds, snakes, and crocodiles were now the main figures. "The cursed crocodile became to me the object of more horror than almost all the rest. I was compelled to live with him; and (as was always the case almost in my dreams) for centuries. I escaped sometimes, and found myself in Chinese houses, with cane tables, &c. All the feet of the tables, sofas, &c., soon became instinct with life: the abominable head of the crocodile, with his leering eyes, looked out at me, multiplied into a thousand repetitions: and I stood loathing and fascinated. And so often did this hideous reptile haunt my dreams, that many times the very same dream was broken up in the very same way: I heard gentle voices speaking to me (I hear everything when I am sleeping); and instantly I awoke: it was broad noon; and my children were standing, hand in hand, at my bedside; come to show me their coloured shoes, or new frocks, or to let me see them dressed for going out. I protest that so awful was the transition from the damned crocodile, and the other unutterable monsters and abortions of my dreams, to the sight of innocent *human* natures and of infancy, that, in the mighty and sudden revulsion of mind, I wept, and could not forbear it, as I kissed their faces."

The countenances of those with whom he had been brought into terms of fellowship during the sad years of his wanderings—more especially that of Ann of Oxford Street—were mingled in the gloomy pageant, sometimes sad and sorrowful, sometimes as if patiently beseeching, but always passing away from him amid sighs and tears, and the sense of everlasting farewells.

Such is an indication of De Quincey's opium-dreams, which we forbear to indicate more in detail, as they are so well known, and lie so easily accessible in his "Confessions of an Opium-Eater" and "The Suspiria de Profundis." In the "Confessions," too, he tells, with a candour as remarkable as is the literary tact used in conveying it, how he did, by a great effort, free himself from this utter domination of opium, asserting for himself such comparative freedom as enabled him to do

some measure of steady work. In this it is evident that we owe much to the unwearying devotion of his wife, and the unwavering faith she had in her husband's powers. She was a "woman of a steady mind, tender and deep in her excess of love," using, day by day, for the due support of her affection, patient good sense, admirable management, and uncomplaining readiness of service. With what fragrance of satisfied affection De Quincey has enshrined her in his records, making her knit together, like a mystic band of light, the two periods of his life marked by most transcendent sufferings, to relieve and soften both:—

"I, who participated, as it were, in the troubles of Orestes (excepting only in his agitated conscience), participated no less in all his supports. My Eumenides, like his, were at my bed-feet, and stared in upon me through the curtains; but watching by my pillow, or defrauding herself of sleep to bear me company through the heavy watches of the night, sat my Electra: for thou, beloved M., dear companion of my later years, thou wast my Electra! and neither in nobility of mind nor in long-suffering affection, wouldst permit that a Grecian sister should excel an English wife. For thou thoughtest not much to stoop to humble offices of kindness, and to servile ministrations of tenderest affection,—to wipe away for years the unwholesome dew upon the forehead, or to refresh the lips when parched and baked with fever; nor, even when thy own peaceful slumbers had by long sympathy become infected with the spectacle of my dread contest with phantoms and shadowy enemies, that oftentimes bade me 'sleep no more!'—not even then didst thou utter a complaint or any murmur, nor withdraw thy angelic smiles, nor shrink from thy service of love more than Electra did of old. For she, too, though she was a Grecian woman, and the daughter of the king of men, yet wept sometimes, and hid her face in her robe."

With the casuistry of love, he finds opportunities to celebrate the devotion of his wife in many relations. He acknowledges of the earlier period of his married

life in Westmoreland:—"Without the aid of M., all records of bills paid, or *to be* paid, must have perished; and my whole domestic economy, whatever became of Political Economy, must have gone into irretrievable confusion." And again, when he has been led, by the phantasy of inviting a painter to reproduce the interior of his Grasmere cottage, with all its surroundings in these evil days—ruby opium-decanter and all—to refer to the personal appearance of his wife, he exclaims:—"But no, dear M., not even in jest let me insinuate that thy power to illuminate my cottage rests upon a tenure so perishable as mere personal beauty; or that the witchcraft of angelic smiles lies within the empire of any earthly pencil."

And elsewhere he goes on to say of this time:—

"But the years came—for I have lived too long, reader, in relation to many things; and the report of me would have been better, or more uniform at least, had I died some twenty years ago—the years came in which circumstances made me an opium-eater: years through which a shadow as of sad eclipse sate and rested upon my faculties; years through which I was careless of all but those who lived within *my* inner circle, within 'my heart of hearts;' years—ah, heavenly years!—through which I lived, beloved, *with* thee, *to* thee, *for* thee, *by* thee! Ah, happy, happy years! in which I was a mere football of reproach, but in which every wind and sounding hurricane of wrath or contempt flew by, like chasing enemies past some defying gate of adamant, and left me too blessed in thy smiles—angel of life!—to heed the curses or the mocking which sometimes I heard raving outside of our impregnable Eden. What any man said of me in those days, what he thought, did I ask? did I care? Then it was, or nearly then, that I ceased to see, ceased to hear of Southey; as much abstracted from all which concerned the world outside, and from the Southneys and even the Coleridges, as though I had lived with the darlings of my heart in the centre of Canadian forests, and all men else in the centre of Hindostan."

He had ceased to see, had ceased almost to hear of others who had been more closely knit to him by the claims of common sympathies, and of friendly and brotherly services.

It needs to be borne in mind, however, that, though these recollections are in no way necessarily or consciously falsified, they are coloured by the fancy and impression through which they are viewed ; and it only needs to be said that in reality he was not for any lengthened period thus exiled from companionship or contact with the outer world.





CHAPTER XIV.

THE WESTMORLAND GAZETTE.

IT is somewhat inconsistent with our impressions of De Quincey, as gathered from a survey of the later portions of his life, to think of him as an active newspaper editor,—writing his “leaders” from week to week, endeavouring to stir up or to maintain an interest in local topics by the manœuvre of a “Letter to the Editor,” trying to deepen the thought of his readers by bits of lively dialogue, or combating with polished periods, and an undoubted air of partisanship, the “liberal” ideas that in those days were thought by many to be radical. So, nevertheless, it was; and his experiences of newspaper editorship furnish by no means unentertaining or insignificant passages in his career. For during his connection with a weekly newspaper his interest in the topics of every day was deepened and directed; his knowledge of history, the stores of fact and reference with which his memory was charged, were now strengthened by being regularly drawn upon; and a certain ease and readiness of expression cultivated, which no doubt afterwards materially aided him in his struggles in London. We find him thus, towards the end of 1819, writing to his uncle, Colonel Penson, explanatory of his conditon, monetary and otherwise, in view of accepting the allowance or the aid which, as we

have seen, had been frequently tendered and declined before:—

“In the course of the late contest for this county, those gentlemen who are friends to the constitution and establishments of this country found it necessary to establish a newspaper at the principal town in the county (Kendal), to oppose the infamous levelling doctrines diffused by Mr. Brougham and the old newspaper established seven or eight years ago (the *Kendal Chronicle*). An editor was procured from London; but he disgusted them in every way, and the principal gentlemen of the county then addressed an application to me, proposing that I should take the editorship: £160 a year was offered, but it was necessary to reside in Kendal. This I would have done, but my wife’s illness, and an utter impossibility of raising the money for removing in the time prescribed (viz., between the 9th and 16th of July), obliged me at first with great pain of mind to decline it; but they then made a second application, offering that a clerk of the press should be hired to take those duties (in relation to advertisements, &c.) which must be performed by some one on the spot, and that I should pay him out of the £160, and receive the difference myself. This I accepted. The clerk was hired from a newspaper office in Manchester. He had previously £85 per annum, and he would not give up a certainty for less than two guineas a week; this deducted £109, 4s. from my £160, and left therefore but £50, 16s. per annum. However, the proprietors made it up to a guinea a week, and I have, therefore, a guinea a week *certain* for at least four years to come; and this I can retain at any distance; for though I now make up the paper and select and revise all the component articles, yet this labour is no part of my duties, but I have volunteered that part by way of raising the character and extending the sale of the paper; but my proper duty is simply to write a political essay on some subject of my own choosing, and this I can do at any distance. By the way, I have ordered the people in

the office to send you the paper regularly from about 18th July last, and if it has missed you in any week, I beg you to mention it. As editor, I can send it you gratis.

"2. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* allows me to write as much as will produce sixty guineas a year. For the late months, I have had my time too much occupied with the newspaper to be at liberty for any labour in that work, and have been too ill almost to manage the newspaper. However, I have compelled myself to work so much, that the circulation of the paper is now much increased.

"3. The *Quarterly Review* has allowed me to write what has yielded 120 guineas a year. Mr. Murray, the publisher, sent me a work for reviewal four months ago (the entire works of Schiller in 26 vols.), and it is still lying here, I am sorry to say, untouched; for the same reasons as I assigned in the last case, I have not yet been able to touch it.

"These three sources will produce 232 guineas (or £243, 12s.) per annum. This, added to my warehouse rent, will be £260.

"If you feel disposed to assist me, it would enable you to assist me much more readily by allowing me to draw a bill upon you at two months after date. This would answer my purpose, and would defer the time by so much at which the money would need to be raised, in whatever way it is raised. I need not repeat that your security would be amply sufficient to raise £500; say £150 now, and the other £350 in six or eight months hence, when I should be able to remove to London and to follow the law.

"This assistance would re-establish me for life. I do not doubt your willingness to assist me, if possible. In 1810, you pressed me to accept an allowance, and have often pressed me since, and this I have declined now for nine years running."

De Quincey, we should remark, was connected with the *Gazette* from its start in 1818, but only began to

edit it in the summer of 1819. He had full confidence that the aid asked from Colonel Penson would be readily given, as afterwards it was, and he threw himself into the business of editing with a dash and enthusiasm which astonish us.

His editorial work has a value for us in this also, as bearing on his second comparative escape from opium. There can be no doubt that the occupation of the mind, and the active interests which called for more exercise and movement than might else have been persevered in, were powerful aids. In not a few of his compositions, particularly his "Letters to the Editor," there was certainly not a little fun and fire. He kept a keen eye on the correspondence sent to the editor, and made it a point to deal with anything of importance that arose. For example, here is a portion of his reply to a "Plain Man," who seems to have been inclined to view rather lightly accusations made against Brougham for discourtesy and rudeness towards opponents:—

"We shall request the public to observe what is the way of measuring independence adopted and acknowledged by a 'Plain Man' amongst the Blues. Mr. Brougham in the supposed acts of mutiny against the body of Opposition is pronounced to have conducted himself 'independently,' &c. What, then, were the demands of Mr. Ponsonby which it is so honourable to Mr. Brougham and so characteristic of his '*enlightened mind*' that he disobeyed? Were they demands that he should sacrifice any principle, that he should forego any right, that he should compromise any duty? No; the speeches which he delivered and the votes which he gave (all of them servile to the views of his party), are so many vouchers that they were not. What were Mr. Ponsonby's demands as represented in the mock trial which is the ground of the 'Plain Man's' complaint? Nothing more than the customary courtesies which have been immemorially practised towards the leader of the Opposition party, and which are indeed indispensable for the purpose of combining the efforts

of any Parliamentary party in the pursuit of common ends? Mr. Brougham was to give notice to Mr. Ponsonby of any motions he desired to bring forward; he was not to insist upon his right of priority in any accidental collision between himself and Mr. P., as he would have done with another member, &c., &c. Is it possible to conceive a more thoroughly ignoble and grovelling nature than that which would clothe with the honourable attributes of independence Mr. Brougham's refusal of these gentlemanly courtesies? In what class of actions Mr. Brougham's ought upon this occasion to be ranked we shall best express by a short story. In the year 1806 or 1807, several Oxonians were going up from Oxford to London. A fellow-passenger by chance on the same coach was a young American, nephew to President Adams. In the course of conversation a question arose as to the comparative degrees of liberty allowed by the English and the American constitutions. This had been discussed with some warmth, and the travelling party had advanced within eight or nine miles of the capital, when suddenly, at a turn of the road between Hounslow and London, some outriders of the royal guard announced that the King was on the road and not far behind. According to the custom observed in England, the coach drew up immediately to one side of the road, and (as is also the custom in England) when His Majesty came in sight a few minutes afterwards, all the Englishmen about the coach remained bareheaded until he had passed them. Hereupon '*Jonathan*' triumphed greatly as upon an unlooked-for adjudication in his favour of a dispute that could not otherwise have been determined."

It is hardly necessary to say, however, that his tendency to the abstract, and his incapacity to realise the "speculative" powerlessness of the ordinary newspaper-reader, led him to throw away thoughts, and whole trains of thought, that students and political economists would have poured over with delight, in long and elaborate "leaders," that were, we fear, unread save by the

very few. The unpractical character of the man reveals itself here, though there is much in the columns of the *Westmorland Gazette* that bespeaks his future eminence both as a thinker and as a writer. His lack of appreciation of the needs of a country newspaper is strongly brought out by the reasons he gives for persisting in his efforts to raise the Westmoreland farmers to the region of philosophic principle. In reply to a correspondent who had urged more attention to the *unlearned* reader, he takes occasion to justify his position in endeavouring to win the suffrages of the learned, and claims vast advantages for any one as an interpreter of public opinion who has mixed familiarly with the higher as well as the lower classes of society:—

“The editor will frankly avow that, in his judgment, the rank of a gentleman is for any person who presumes to influence public opinion an important qualification on its own account, and independently of its advantages in respect to education. He who is to speak to all classes, and occasionally to speak of all classes, ought to know something more of them all than can be gathered from books; he ought to have a personal knowledge of every class from the highest to the lowest, and should have been upon the footing of a familiar acquaintance no less in the palace of the prince than in the cottage of the humblest peasant. On a triple account this may be demanded as necessary to accomplish him for his office—first as furnishing him with that great body of general knowledge relating to things in perpetual flux and motion, which never finds its way into books, and is to be had only from extensive intercourse with the world; secondly, for the sake of that particular knowledge by which he is to measure with accuracy the peculiar advantages, wants, and defects of every class, so as to be able profitably to adapt his addresses to each; thirdly, for the sake of accrediting himself with every class, so as to justify the monitorial tone which he will sometimes find himself called upon to assume, and for the purpose of giving weight and

effect to his opinions. No class will ever regard the monitor with much respect who is palpably, and upon the evidence of his own blunders, unacquainted with their actual condition. Apart, therefore, from its inestimable advantages as affording the means of regular education (*i.e.*, the pecuniary means and the leisure), the station of a gentleman has other and separate advantages of its own for him who presents himself as an organ of public feeling for giving voice and expression to it where it is right, and as a corrector of public feeling where it goes astray. But what need for insisting upon advantages so obvious? It is not aristocratical to affirm them; it is not so much Jacobinical as it is irrational to deny them. No doubt Q. and P. Q. themselves, whatsoever they may *assert* for the support of an argument, in their *actions* bear a daily testimony to their own belief in these advantages. No doubt they seek their legal and medical advice from those who have had the means of cultivating that kind of knowledge; and, by parity of reason, they ought to seek their political knowledge from those whose station has allowed them the benefit of a good education, rather than from those who bring no previous knowledge (unless they claim to be inspired)."

And he goes on to inform his readers that he has hopes of making the paper influential throughout the kingdom and in the universities—a result which, even though it might have been secured, looks very like hanging your grapes so high that, as befell the fox in the fable, you can but look at without enjoying them:—

"The editor can assure his readers that his own personal friends in most of the universities, especially in the three weightiest—Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh—are quite competent in number and power to float the *Gazette* triumphantly into every section and division of those learned bodies. The paper would thus be put upon its trial. And what would be the issue he cannot permit himself to doubt, when he adds, that each and all

of these friends are ready to furnish their literary assistance, in addition to that he may calculate upon in Westmoreland. Q. reminds the editor of his 'uneducated readers' in Westmoreland. The editor does not forget them; but he is persuaded that it is a mere oversight in Q. to have neglected mentioning his *well-educated* and his *learned* readers in the same county, who are very numerous. And from them also he has reason to hope for powerful aid. He may add that, as respects this corner of the kingdom, he has received assurances of support from two of the most illustrious men in point of intellectual pretensions that have appeared for some ages.* With such assistance there can be no presumption in supposing that the *Gazette* would have some *positive* means, as well as all the *negative* means, for making its way in the universities. The presumption would be in doubting it. The editor will go a step further. He will venture to affirm that, even without the powerful aid here noticed (to which he might have added a promise of co-operation from London, and the four great commercial towns of the second class, many of the third class, and so downwards—as also occasionally from Paris and Vienna, from Canada, and from Hindostan, &c.)—that even without the powerful aid here noticed, he could singly and unsupported secure to the *Gazette* one feature of originality which would draw upon it a general notice throughout Great Britain; and justly, inasmuch as it would give it a distinction peculiar to itself, and unshared by any other literary or scientific journal whatsoever. This the editor may say without vanity; for his part would be no more than a ministerial office—to select and to translate. His allusion is this—the German literature is at this time beyond all question, for science and for philosophy properly so called, the wealthiest in the world. It is an absolute Potosi; and a Potosi not like the present Potosi in Peru, which has been worked so long that at length it will not pay the workers; but a Potosi like that which was found

* Doubtless Wordsworth and Coleridge, or perhaps Southey.

on its first discovery by the Spaniards—a mine of which the riches are scarcely known by rumour to this country.”

The files of the *Westmorland Gazette* in those days present such an odd mixture of the really clever, piquant, and available, along with so much that was literally out of place, and worse than wasted, that we are compelled to own De Quincey was not born for a successful newspaper editor, and never could have been made one.

The disadvantage of his position in Kendal which he felt the most was his separation from his family. His engagements were so constant and absorbing, that visits to Grasmere could not be frequent. His letters to his wife are short, full of affection. Thus he writes to her shortly after he had assumed the duties:—

“COMMERCIAL INN,
11 o'clock on Thursday Night.

“MY DEAR WIFE,—I have this moment received your note. It has put me into a little better spirits; for I have been in very bad spirits ever since I left home. I quitted Grasmere with a heavy heart, and I was sure I should find nothing in Kendal to comfort me. Indeed, I have found nothing here but trouble of all sorts. I hope, however, that I shall soon get the paper into a right train; and the proprietors are very willing to allow me my own way. The trouble I find is solely among the inferior people about the press. I am truly grieved to hear of little Margaret's illness; I hope that it is not the forerunner of anything worse. God bless her, poor little lamb! If you come over to-morrow in a chaise, I shall be very happy to see you; or if you prefer next week, I shall be very happy to attend you. God bless you, my sweet wife! and believe me most affectionately yours,

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.”

Whilst he was editor of the *Westmorland Gazette* he also wrote in *Blackwood* and in the *Quarterly Review*, as we have seen. The following shows him in his best

vein. He is reviewing Lord Castlereagh's account of Westmoreland, and can throw over his theme a ray of that captivating humour which is so characteristic :—

“When I consider what it is that I have undertaken to do, when I consider what it is that I have done, that I have presumed to review and cut up the Foreign Secretary's account of Westmoreland, and not only so, but that (unlike all other reviewers) I have undertaken to give a better myself; when I consider, further, that I shall thus have drawn upon myself the heavy displeasure of His Majesty's Government, and that my single and unworthy person is confronted, as it were, in single duel with the whole of the present Administration (who will all naturally take part with Lord Castlereagh in this matter), I feel so much confounded that I am obliged to pause and to take two glasses of London particular Madeira. What am I, that I should presume to oppose the whole Cabinet, backed, as I fear they will be on this occasion, by the great local power of the King's Lieutenant for the two counties of Westmoreland and Cumberland? What am I, that I should present myself as the single opposition against the combined weight of the Lowther and Treasury influence? In myself I have nothing; but I have truth and ichthyology on my side, which Lord Castlereagh has not; and it is on those and on Entick's spelling-dictionary that I build my reliance in this cause; so that I shall proceed fearlessly; and I defy any gentleman of Kendal or Ambleside (however much attached to the present Administration) to contradict one word of what I shall say.

“When I throw out this defiance, it will naturally be supposed that what I am going to say must be pretty notorious, and that I do not bring it forward as any discovery of my own, or as a matter that can be very new to most of my readers. In fact, I do not; the main proposition on which I build in opposing the present Administration is sufficiently familiar to all who know anything about Westmoreland, and can be no news except perhaps to some few persons in the African

kingdom of Ashantee or in the Oriental one of Nepaul. It is in the development of this proposition that I pretend to some merit. I begin, then, with asserting (but rather as a postulate, and for the benefit of some people in Ashantee,* than as a theorem that can need any formal enunciation of proof), that the official account of Westmoreland was painfully superficial, inasmuch as not *Lakes and Hams*, but *Char and Poets*, are notoriously the two productions with which the fortunate county of Westmoreland solaces her defects in all other sorts of wealth. Blest in these riches beyond the rivalry of all other counties, and raised equally above detraction and competition, Westmoreland is rather proud than otherwise of that pleasing sterility in all other points which she everywhere exhibits, and I think with some reason. For look at her next neighbour to the east—Yorkshire, with her great long corpulent person, and her fat greasy pastures that turn a man's stomach to think of, stretched out basking her 'hairy strength' like Milton's lubbar fiend, and, like *that* lubbar, perfectly content if her 'bowl of cream be duly set!' We need not ask if *she* has any poets. But in Westmoreland what a contrast! A fine light gravelly soil, excellently watered, of which almost every square mile you can fix on will keep two cows; then, as to cream, I believe there never was any in Westmoreland. The milk is of a beautiful azure or cerulean colour as soon as it first sees the light (hence, by the way, a great saving of labour; for the Westmoreland milk comes into this world ready skimmed). All this, however, is digression. Yet, if the reader would stretch his indulgence so far as to bear with me in a little further digression in honour of the Westmoreland sterility (which, after all, is *not* digression, seeing that to this very sterility and gravelly soil, I am convinced, that we are indebted for

* "The King of Ashantee, as was mentioned in some former number of the magazine, is a great reader of our miscellany, and has some knowledge of the Latin poets; but his studies appear to be ill-directed, as he is there stated to confine himself to the Commercial Report (if our memory does not deceive us)."

the luxuriance of our admirable poets), I would attempt to illustrate the excellent effects of a hungry diet upon the wits of either man and beast by drawing the character of a Westmoreland sheep. To do this with any effect, I must contrast him with a sheep from Leicestershire or Lincolnshire. Perhaps some of my readers have seen the two in company together, as I have ; if indeed that could be called company in which, from total want of sympathy and congeniality of temper, there could be no sort of conversation—the Westmoreland sheep manifesting a contempt that was almost like compassion for the comatose, apoplectic stupidity of his unwieldy relative ; whilst he of Lincolnshire stared at his mercurial cousin with that sort of leaden-eyed dulness of astonishment with which a London police-magistrate might be supposed to survey me if I were called up before him for writing this article against Lord Castlereagh. Cast your eyes over any flock of Westmoreland sheep, and you will observe that there is scarcely one but looks like a person of some genius ; in fact, most of them are so ; for they all live by their wits, since, without a general system of robbery, no Westmoreland sheep could get on at all, having seldom more than a thousand acres apiece of Westmoreland grass ; and what is that for one sheep ? Now turn to the Lincoln or Leicester sheep or ‘mug’ (as they call him, and very justly). What a beast ! his tail even presents a physical barrier to all activity. But in fact they are not a bit better when their tails are cut off, as, by the bye, I believe they generally are about Christmas ; for at that season the Lincolnshire people make sheep-tail pies, which are sent all over the kingdom as presents, in pie-dishes as big as a kitchen-table ; and such is the disrespectable character of the sheep in that county, that nobody pities them. I have heard it suggested, indeed, that they look grave, and as if they were thinking ; but in fact it is all pretence ; they are *not* thinking about anything—except the gratification of their passions ; for a Lincolnshire ‘mug’ is thoroughly unprincipled, and gives himself up deliberately to a licentious course of life. As the subject is rather un-

pleasant to a well-regulated mind, I shall say no more about it than just to suggest, as a word of parting counsel to the sheep of Lincoln in general, that pie-dishes, which I had occasion to mention just now, are surely a most fortunate invention for *them*, and that the sooner they get into them the better; for when they are once fairly dead and buried in a pie-dish, there's an end of it, and people are shy of reflecting much upon their past conduct. But really this is the only safe course left for their posthumous reputation; for, upon my word, it is distressing to all people of feeling to witness so much stupidity, and so many abortive attempts at running and jumping (to say nothing of their immoralities). But enough of these dull brutes; let us turn once again to a more pleasing subject. A Westmoreland sheep, I have already admitted, is not very conscientious about the rights of property. In this point indeed, as well as his wit and agility, he resembles the god Mercury; but barring that, his moral character is good. It is, however, in his intellectual character that his merit is most conspicuous; in the presence of a 'mug' he looks like the most acute London swindler before a drowsy judge or recorder. In fact, in Westmoreland so much are most sheep respected that it is considered illiberal to regard them in the light of mutton. I remember being in company with an old wether at Grasmere who had manifestly made some progress in the Transcendental Philosophy. My friend Mr. de Q. lectured him for some time on the categories; he clearly showed the absurdity of Aristotle's ten predicaments, with their long dangling tail of supplementary or post-predicaments, like the tail of a Lincolnshire 'mug' (this comparison was put *ad hominem*, if I may so express it, and the old wether enjoyed the joke; in fact, he said Aristotle had got into a cursed predicament. He concluded with a few words on the distinction between the analytic and synthetic unity of consciousness). I never saw anybody pay more attention; not like young ladies at the Royal Institution, who never look at the lecturer since Sir H. D. has withdrawn his fine eyes and his beautiful kid gloves. This man, on the contrary—this

sheep, I should say—looked at nobody but the lecturer, nodding occasionally when he assented, and sometimes striking the ground with one of his fore-feet, especially at the pathetic passages on the connection between cause and effect, or wherever he wished to express his emphatical approbation. On the whole, his opinion seemed favourable to Kant; and I remarked that, just as the lecture closed, a flock of giddy young sheep and lambs happening to come past, this respectable Transcendentalist ran after and joined them—anxious no doubt to communicate the benefits of philosophy. But all this is digression, into which my zeal for Westmoreland has betrayed me. It explains, however, the main secret of the poetical supremacy of the Lake county; for, when sheer hunger makes the sheep transcendental, it cannot but make the poets sublime.”

For the greater part of a year De Quincey remained editor, and resigned only under the necessity of turning his pen to more profitable account. For some years after he remained an occasional contributor, and sent a few racy notes on current topics—among other things, as we have seen, a letter on the dialect of the Lake district, in which he found the strong presence of a Danish element.

After he had retired from the editorship of the *Westmorland Gazette* he made an effort to settle himself in Edinburgh, which, however, did not succeed. We have records of it in his correspondence, records also of the great kindness of friends there, as in this letter to his wife:—

“*Saturday Morning, December 9, 1820.*

“MY DEAR MARGARET,—It grieves me to think how regularly I have been thwarted in all attempts to write to you hitherto by constant interruptions. Even now I have only time for a few lines; but, remembering that if I were to defer writing until to-morrow’s post the letter would reach Kendal on *Tuesday*, and Ambleside, therefore, not till Wednesday (from the want of a post on Tuesday), I snatch one minute to tell you that I am

tolerably well—much better, at least, than when I left home—and that all is going well. All my old friends here are more kind than I can express. Without any trouble on my part, they have procured me lodgings, books, and everything that I can wish, or rather ten times more. And invitations crowd so fast upon me that I hardly know how I shall get through all my writing, &c. In the course of to-morrow I will write a *long* letter to you; and as I will be careful to put it into the post on Monday morning, you will have it by Wednesday (that is to say, as soon as if it had been put into the post to-morrow).

“Write a few lines to me by *Wednesday's* post to say that all is going on well, no matter how little. Give my best love to the children, and believe me, with kind remembrances to Mary, yours, my dear Peggy, most faithfully and affectionately,

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

“Direct to me at No. 30 Northumberland Street, Edinburgh.

“*P.S.*—Southey was kind and polite beyond even anything I expected, though he was always as much so as anybody I ever knew.”





CHAPTER XV.

IN LONDON AGAIN.



OF De Quincey's excessive liberalities we have had occasion to speak. His readiness to befriend others in those years from 1808 to 1820 was pursued almost to the point of madness. Losses did not teach him customary prudence. Failures of business firms involving great sacrifices of his capital did not make him slower to aid his friends. Indeed, it may be said that at this period, as afterwards, he did not have a friend who was not welcome to his purse; and letters on letters before us bear this out, though we are hardly free to print them. Loans of large sums were given in many instances, some of which were honourably repaid, some not. A full list of his benefactions during this period, were such attainable, would conclusively attest this; and we venture to say would atone in most minds for charges preferred against him sometimes in after-years of making too free with the knowledge he had gained of great contemporaries in private intercourse. We do not think he often overstepped the legitimate limit; and if in some instances he spoke somewhat too freely, it might well be pleaded that he regarded himself as having suffered wrong. In the year 1821 we find that a great part of his patrimony had melted away, and that he was in difficulties. During his life at Oxford, as we

have seen, the narrow illiberality of his guardians had led him to throw himself into the hands of Jews, who, though he attests that they honourably fulfilled what they promised, needed from him, as from others, interest commensurate with the risks they ran. His necessities had become imperative by the spring of 1821, and it was under a heavy sense of painful work before him that he struggled to rid himself wholly of the incubus of opium. It was whilst he was endeavouring to "untwist the last links of the chain" that he made his way to London in the summer of that year, to seek engagements as a writer. He himself says of this time :—

"I was descending the mighty ladder, stretching to the clouds as it seemed, by which I had imperceptibly attained my giddy altitude—that point from which it had seemed equally impossible to go forward or backward. To wean myself from opium, I had resolved inexorably ; and finally I accomplished my vow. But the transition stage was the worst state to support."

He thus indicates to us the special features of the sufferings incident to that period :—

"I was ill at that time, and for years after,—ill from the effects of opium upon the liver ; and one primary indication of any illness felt in that organ is peculiar depression of spirits. Hence arose a singular effect of reciprocal action in maintaining a state of dejection. From the original physical depression caused by the derangement of the liver, arose a sympathetic depression of the mind, disposing me to believe that I never could extricate myself ; and from this belief arose, by reaction, a thousandfold increase of the physical depression. I began to view my unhappy London life—a life of literary toils, odious to my heart—as a permanent state of exile from my Westmoreland home. My three eldest children, at that time in the most interesting stages of childhood and infancy, were in Westmoreland ; and so powerful was my feeling (derived merely from a deranged liver) of some long, never-ending separation from my family, that at length, in pure weakness of mind, I was obliged to relinquish my daily walks in Hyde Park and Kensing-

ton Gardens, from the misery of seeing children in multitudes that too forcibly recalled my own."

This piteous recoil even from the sight of childish faces that suggested the faces of his own children in Westmoreland debarred him too largely from daily exercise, in which lay his one element of hope. We are not, therefore, greatly surprised to learn that during the latter portion of his stay in London—that is, in 1823–24—he fell for the third time under the dominion of opium. We can easily understand and sympathise with him in the struggles and difficulties that would inevitably present themselves in such circumstances.

The general difficulties under which a man who has hitherto written mostly for his own pleasure finds himself working when he must have in his eye the tastes and demands of a capricious audience were much intensified in De Quincey's case by difficulties of a special and personal kind. Some of these he tells us he experienced in common with Coleridge, others not. "Coleridge," he says, "assured me that he never could read anything he had written without a sense of overpowering disgust. . . . I, like Mr. Coleridge, could not endure what I had written for some time after I had written it. I also shrank from treating any subject which I had much considered; but more, I believe, as recoiling from the intricacy and the elaborateness which had been made known to me in the course of considering it, and on account of the difficulty or the toilsomeness which might be fairly presumed from the mere fact that I *had* long considered it, or could have found it necessary to do so, than from any blind, mechanical feeling inevitably associated (as in Coleridge it was) with a second survey of the same subject. One other effect there was from the opium, and I believe it had some place in Coleridge's list of morbid affections caused by opium, and of disturbances extended even to the intellect—which was, that the judgment was for a time grievously impaired, sometimes even totally abolished, as applied to anything I had recently written. . . . This is mere childish helplessness, or senile paralysis of the judgment, which dis-

tresses the man in attempting to grasp the upshot and the total effect of the *tout ensemble* of what he has himself so recently produced. . . . There was, however, one point in which my case differed from that of Mr. Coleridge. It was this—that at times, when I had slept at more regular hours for several nights consecutively, and had armed myself by a sudden increase of the opium for a few days running, I recovered at times a remarkable glow of jovial spirits. In some such artificial respites it was, from my usual state of distress, and purchased at a heavy price of subsequent suffering, that I wrote the greater part of the ‘Opium Confessions,’ in the autumn of 1821.”

In such conditions it is needless to say that all the supports that friendship and kindly interest could furnish were needed and welcomed. Now it was that De Quincey found in Charles Lamb the true friend that he had sought for. Of Lamb’s kindly aid, so delicately administered, he never ceased to speak with gratitude and delight. He acknowledges that, though he had seen Lamb several times on visits to London earlier, till 1821 he did not thoroughly know him—that, indeed, he had misunderstood him, having allowed, as we are led to infer, an ironical way Lamb had of touching on certain pet subjects to stand too largely for his real character. We must let De Quincey here tell shortly of his several meetings with Lamb in former years, that we may the better appreciate the relation of the two essayists during the years with which we are now concerned, and afterwards. It was in 1804 that De Quincey first saw Elia. Having got a letter of introduction from a literary friend, he called on him at the India House, during one of the trips taken to London whilst he was at Oxford, and this led to his being invited to Lamb’s house in the Temple, where he was then living; but some slight element of uncongeniality arose from the pleasure Lamb apparently took in throwing ridicule on the subjects to which De Quincey was devoted with enthusiasm utterly beyond words. “My admiration for Coleridge,” confesses De Quincey (as in a perhaps still greater degree for

Wordsworth), "was literally in no respect short of a religious feeling; it had indeed all the sanctity of religion, and all the tenderness of a human veneration." But Lamb did not seem to share it. "Like Diogenes, he threw upon us a scoffing air, as of one who stands upon a pedestal of eternity, looking down upon those who share in the transitory feelings of their own age."

We read in Mr. Woodhouse's notes of conversations:—

"Meeting one day with Charles Lamb, who he understood had praised Wordsworth's poetry, he was induced to mention the poet's name, and to speak of him in high terms. Lamb gave him praise, but more qualified than the Opium-Eater expected, who spoke with much warmth on the subject, and complained that Lamb did not do Wordsworth justice. Upon which Lamb, in his dry, facetious way, remarked, 'If we are to talk in this strain, we should have said grace before we began our conversation.' This conversation so annoyed the Opium-Eater that he instantly left the room." *

In 1808 and succeeding years, during visits to London, when De Quincey never failed to call on Coleridge, he repeatedly met Lamb there, and began to correct his earlier impressions of him; the peculiar liking that had arisen between Lamb and De Quincey's sailor-brother, Pink, over pictures and other things, serving no doubt as a link.† But it was reserved for the years 1821-25

* "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater," edited by Richard Garnett. De Quincey, however, himself laughed at his too sensitive and fantastic behaviour afterwards.

† All readers of De Quincey's works will remember with what affectionate tenderness he tells the romantic story of this Pink—how, like his elder brother, he ran away from school, where he was under a cruel pedant, and went to sea; how he fell among pirates, and was saved from being murdered simply by his likeableness, which amounted almost to personal fascination; how he was taken prisoner by the Danes, and gaining his freedom, distinguished himself in the Royal Navy; and how, finally, he mournfully perished just when bright prospects seemed to be opening before him. As long as he kept up correspondence with Thomas, he never failed to send kind messages to Lamb. "Pink liked Lamb greatly; and used in all his letters to request that I would present his best re-

to perfect the sympathy between them. We have from De Quincey's pen this glimpse of the Lambs:—

"The Lambs had heard of my being in solitary lodgings, and insisted on my coming to dine with them, which more than once I did in the winter of 1821-22. The mere reception by the Lambs was so full of goodness and hospitable feeling, that it kindled animation in the most cheerless or torpid of invalids. I cannot imagine that any *memorabilia* occurred during the visit. There were no strangers; Charles Lamb, his sister, and myself made up the party. Even this was done in kindness. They knew that I should have been oppressed by an effort such as must be made in the society of strangers; and they placed me by their own fireside, where I could say as little or as much as I pleased. We dined about five o'clock, and it was one of the hospitalities inevitable to the Lambs, that any game which they might receive from rural friends in the course of the week was reserved for the day of a friend's dining with them."

With a subdued enthusiasm he thus sets forth his conception of Lamb's character:—

"I knew Lamb, and I know certain cases in which he was concerned—cases which it is difficult to publish with any regard to the feelings of persons now living, but which (if published in all their circumstances) would show him to be the very noblest of human beings. He was a man in a sense more eminent than would be conceivable by many people, *princely*—nothing short of that—in his beneficence. Many liberal people I have known in this world—many who were charitable in the widest sense—many munificent people; but never any one upon whom, for bounty, for indulgence and forgiveness, for charitable construction of doubtful or mixed actions, and for regal munificence, you might have thrown yourself with so absolute a reliance as upon this comparatively poor Charles Lamb."

gards to that Charles Lamb, 'who would not be humbugged by the old rascal in Bond Street;' " *i.e.*, a picture-dealer who was high in praise of a certain work of art.

With Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd at this time, too, he enjoyed intercourse. With him De Quincey tells us he had become acquainted in 1808, "in the beautiful hall of the Middle Temple, whence (after dining together in the agreeable style inherited from older days) we sometimes adjourned to our coffee at the chambers of the future author of *Ion*, and enjoyed the luxury of conversation with the *élite* of the young Templars." Talfourd, in one of his Memoirs, thus sketches the better-known notables of these gatherings at Taylor & Hessey's:—"There was Lamb, with humanity ripened among town-bred experiences, and pathos matured by sorrow, at his wisest, sagest, indiscreetest, best; Barry Cornwall, in the first bloom of his modest and enduring fame, streaking the darkest passion with beauty; John Hamilton Reynolds, lighting up the wildest eccentricities and most striking features of many-coloured life with vivid fancy; and, with others of less note, Hazlitt, whose pen, unloosed from the chain which earnest thought and metaphysical dreamings had woven, gave radiant expression to the results of the solitary musings of many years."

To Talfourd, De Quincey was now indebted for his introduction to Messrs. Taylor & Hessey, into whose hands the *London Magazine* had just come. Mr. Taylor, who had written some books—notably one on the *Letters of Junius*—was editor, but he had wisely surrounded himself by a group of distinguished men; and, ready to receive new contingents, gave admiring welcome to Mr. de Quincey. "After the good old fashion of the GREAT TRADE, these genial booksellers used to assemble their contributors round their hospitable table in Fleet Street, where Mr. de Quincey was introduced to his new allies."

Thomas Hood, too, was one of the *London Magazine* brotherhood. He had lost his health as an engraver, and found himself at twenty-one with literary instincts eager for exercise and development. He was fortunate in being introduced to Messrs. Taylor & Hessey; and was engaged as a sort of sub-editor for the magazine, shortly before De Quincey's advent. Many a delicious little essay—forecasting, but no more, by the naïvest vein

of fun, his future pre-eminence as a wit—did he throw into its pages between 1820 and 1824; and he also made friends and gained many pleasant recollections, which he has set forth with all his characteristic drollery in his "Literary Reminiscences." We can easily fancy how, as sub-editor, it would often fall to his lot to stir up the memories of contributors about times and seasons—especially one contributor, to whom, nevertheless, he refers in a vein of love and respect, such as even his bantering and punning manner does in no way suffice to conceal. Much in De Quincey called forth Hood's sympathies, it is clear; and thus the Opium-Eater figures in his "Reminiscences:"—

"When it was my frequent and agreeable duty to call on Mr. de Quincey (being an uncommon name to remember, the servant associated it, on the *memoria technica* principle, with a sore throat, and always pronounced it Quinsy), and I have found him at home, quite at home, in the midst of a German Ocean of Literature, in a storm—flooding all the floor, the table and the chairs—billows of books tossing, tumbling, surging open,—on such occasions I have willingly listened by the hour, whilst the Philosopher, standing, with his eyes fixed on one side of the room, seemed to be less speaking than reading from 'a handwriting on the wall.' Now and then he would diverge, for a Scotch mile or two, to the right or left, till I was tempted to inquire, with Peregrine in 'John Bull' (Coleman's, not Hook's), 'Do you never deviate?'—but he always came safely back to the point where he had left, not lost the scent, and thence hunted his topic to the end. But look!—we are in the small hours, and a change comes o'er the spirit of that 'old familiar face.' A faint hectic tint leaves the cheek, the eyes are a degree dimmer, and each is surrounded by a growing shadow—signs of the waning influence of that Potent Drug whose stupendous Pleasures and enormous Pains have been so eloquently described by the English Opium-Eater. Marry, I have one of his Confessions with his own name and mark to it: an apology for a certain stain on his MS., the said stain being a large purplish

ring. 'Within that circle none durst drink but he,'—in fact, the impression, coloured, of a tumbler of laudanum negus, warm, without sugar."

Not less characteristic, perhaps, is a footnote which Hood gives to this passage:—

"On a visit to Norfolk, I was much surprised to find that opium or opic, as it was vulgarly called, was quite in common use in the form of pills among the lower classes, *in the vicinity of the Fens*. It is not probable that persons in such a rank of life had read the 'Confessions;' or, might not one suspect that [as Denis Brulgruddery was driven to drink by the stale, flat, and unprofitable prospects of Mucklush Heath, so the Fen People in the dreary, foggy, cloggy, boggy wastes of Cambridge and Lincolnshire, had flown to the drug for the sake of the magnificent *scenery* that filled the splendid visions of the historian?"

But the genial Thomas Hood kept other and less tangible memorials of the Opium-Eater than that we have just presented. Doubtless he often met De Quincey at these dinners at Taylor & Hessey's, or at Charles Lamb's; and many years afterwards reminiscences of De Quincey's talk formed the text of one of the most humorous and touching passages in the whole range of Hood's writings—a passage in which he gently played with the idea of death, and made it yield him tribute. It is to be found at the close of the preface to "Hood's Own:"—

"Between ourselves, as I once heard the Opium-Eater declare, it would have been 'extremely inconvenient to pay the debt of nature at that particular juncture;' nor, to be candid, do I quite know," he goes on to illustrate the Opium-Eater's remark, "when it would altogether suit me to settle it, so, like other persons in narrow circumstances, I laughed, and gossiped, and played the agreeable with all my might; and as such pleasant behaviour sometimes obtains a respite from a human creditor, who knows but that it may prove successful with the Universal mortgagee? At all events, here I am, humming 'Jack's Alive!' and my own dear skilful native

physician gives me hopes for a longer lease than appeared from the foreign reading of the Covenants. He declares, indeed, that, anatomically, my heart is lower hung than usual—but what of that? *The more need to keep it up!*”

The admiration and good feeling was mutual. We find De Quincey, in a note to one of his “Autobiographic Sketches”—“Introduction to the World of Strife”—after tracing the origin of the phrase, “The Bridge of Sighs,” beyond Byron and Hood to Venice, adding an *N.B.* to this effect: “In speaking of Hood as having appropriated the phrase *Bridge of Sighs*, I would not be understood to represent him as by possibility aiming at concealment. He was as far above such a meanness by his nobility of heart, as he was raised above all need for it by the overflowing opulence of his genius.”

At the time when Thomas Hood was in the way of making sub-editorial calls, there can be but little doubt that De Quincey, after having occupied apartments in Soho for a short period, had betaken himself to what proved a more permanent abode at York Street, Covent Garden, where we find him domiciled, save, indeed, occasionally during a few months' absence at a time in Westmoreland, up to the beginning of 1824. We find Mr. H. G. Bohn, in Lowndes' “Bibliographer's Manual,” making a note bearing on this point:—

“Those ‘Confessions’ were written in a little room at the back of what later became Mr. H. G. Bohn's premises, No. 4 York Street, Covent Garden, where Mr. de Quincey resided, in comparative seclusion, for several years. He had previously lived in the neighbourhood of Soho Square, and for some years was a frequent visitor to the shop of Mr. Bohn's father, then the principal dealer in German books. The writer remembers that he always seemed to speak in a kind of whisper.”

Several times, De Quincey tells us, he walked for a few miles with Hazlitt through London late at night, and after leaving a party; but always “felt depressed by the spectacle of a mind constantly in agitation from the gloomier passions.”



CHAPTER XVI.

THE LONDON MAGAZINE.

THE evident tendency of such gatherings as that at Taylor & Hessey's is to become ill-assorted, through the submergence of the social feelings under those of business and self-interest. Besides, there were special drawbacks to De Quincey's full enjoyment. The conductors of the *London Magazine* were Dissenters, if they were not even touched by a kind of free-thinking; and it was a part of their policy to deal freely not only with the Church, but with religious questions. De Quincey, in spite of a philosophic desire to investigate all things for himself, confesses that:—

“Being myself, not by birth and breeding only, but upon the deliberate adoption of my judgment, an affectionate son of the Church of England, in respect to her doctrines, her rites, her discipline, and her internal government, it both shocked and grieved me to meet with what seemed to me so much levity of rash judgment amongst the thoughtful and well-principled,—so harsh an illiberality amongst the liberal, so little consideration amongst the considerate.”

But if such drawbacks arose in the social meetings to which he was invited, there were few drawbacks to the advantages which speedily arose to De Quincey from the appearance of his first contributions in the *London Magazine*. He had intended unambitiously

to begin with translations from the German; but his opium experiences, and his resolute efforts to escape from the thralldom of the drug, had of course been the subject of conversation on his first introduction to the circle, which was so impressed by his recitals, that he was asked to inaugurate his connection with the magazine by a record of his opium experiences. Accordingly, there appeared in the *London Magazine* for October and November 1821, the "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater." Few magazine articles have ever produced a deeper or a more general impression.

We have found among his papers a little bundle of letters, which Mr. Taylor, of the firm of Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, had handed to him as likely to afford him gratification from the favourable verdict of distinguished men. Amongst them are notes from Sir James Mackintosh, Horace Smith, and James Montgomery. Sir James says:—

"I have just read the second part of the 'Opium-Eater' with more delight than I know how to express. I felt such a wish to read the first that I could not help telling you that poor Scott [the former editor of the *London Magazine*] used to send me the magazine, and that if you should follow his example, I can afford to pay you regularly by the pleasure which I shall experience every month, if the publication continues to be good. . . . I had not the soreness which your critic on Madame de Staël supposed I should feel at some passage of his criticism, and I read of parliamentary debates being 'the rinsings of the human understanding' without abating or embittering my admiration of the Opium-Eater."

Mr. Horace Smith, who dates from Versailles, is equally enthusiastic:—

"Several literary avocations have hitherto prevented my contributing to the *London*, but I hope soon to have more leisure, and to send you something; though you really seem to have little need of new hands or heads. What an admirable paper the 'Confessions of an Opium-Eater!' I have seen nothing so original and interesting in periodical literature."

The numbers were speedily exhausted, and a reprint appeared early in 1822, and a second edition in 1823. To this little volume an appendix was added, in which the writer gave a tabulated report of his process of reducing the amount taken day by day. The book whetted the interest, instead of satisfying it. De Quincey, however, could not at that time see his way to make additions to the *Opium-Confessions*. In not a few quarters he was astonished to find doubts raised whether there was not an element of fiction in the narrative, and in others a blunt assertion made that a *ruse* had been tried on the credulity of the reading public by a mere invention. He could not then bring himself to write more on a subject which seemed to have such fascination for readers in general—learned and simple alike—that a mere popularity-seeker might well have envied him his prerogative, and gone on producing. The doubt as to the complete genuineness of the record was soon uttered by those whose opinion could not but carry weight. The *North American Review* merely gathered up and set in critical language a feeling which widely obtained at the time of the publication of the “*Confessions*,” when it said:—

“We should like to go behind the screen on which he has been pleased to cast the shadows, and see how far the reality corresponds with the picture; and learn, too, something more of those portions which now lie as a blank, since the filling of them is quite necessary for a full understanding of what is so skilfully portrayed. Not that we doubt the truthfulness of the unusually frank narrative, or have a right to pry into personal secrets which the writer chooses to conceal; but we are sometimes in doubt whether what is sometimes stated apparently as narrative is not really meant for brilliant fiction, or at least for ‘fiction founded on fact.’”

And in the *Sheffield Iris* Mr. James Montgomery wrote some articles, in the course of which he expressed the same opinion; giving in the opening a very striking theory of dreams and dreaming, with many touches that bespeak the poet and artist.

Favourable notice from such quarters was in itself

gratifying; and when the doubt whether these "Confessions" were true narratives or only fiction, or partly fiction, came couched in language of complete respect and appreciation, De Quincey felt called on to make some reply—to give such assurance as was within his scope, that the sketches were genuine narratives, as faithful as they could be made in the circumstances, of what really had occurred to him, and not mere fanciful inventions. He therefore sent to the *London Magazine* this letter, which duly appeared there:—

"SIR,—I have seen in the *Sheffield Iris* a notice of my two papers, entitled 'Confessions of an English Opium-Eater.' Notice of any sort from Mr. Montgomery could not have failed to gratify me, by proving that I had so far succeeded in my efforts, as to catch the attention of a distinguished man of genius; a notice so emphatic as this, and introduced by an exordium of so much beauty as that contained in the two first paragraphs on the faculty of dreaming, I am bound in gratitude to acknowledge as a more flattering expression and memorial of success than any which I had allowed myself to anticipate.

"I am not sorry that a passage in Mr. Montgomery's comments enables me to take notice of a doubt which had reached me before; the passage I mean is this: in the fourth page of the *Iris*, amongst the remarks with which Mr. Montgomery has introduced the extracts which he has done me the honour to make, it is said: 'Whether this character' (the character in which the Opium-Eater speaks) 'be real or imaginary, we know not.' The same doubt was reported to me as having been made in another quarter; but, in that instance, as clothed in such discourteous expressions, that I do not think it would have been right for me, or that on a principle of just self-respect I could have brought myself to answer it at all; which I say in no anger, and I hope with no other pride than that which may reasonably influence any man in refusing an answer to all direct impeachments of his veracity. From Mr. Montgomery,

however, this scruple on the question of authenticity comes in the shape which might have been anticipated from his own courteous and honourable nature, and implies no more than a suggestion (in one view, perhaps, complimentary to myself) that the whole might be professedly and intentionally a fictitious case as respected the incidents, and chosen as a more impressive form for communicating some moral or medical admonitions to the confirmed opium-eater. Thus shaped, I cannot have any right to quarrel with this scruple. But on many accounts I should be sorry that such a view were taken of the narrative by those who may happen to read it. And, therefore, I assure Mr. Montgomery, in this public way, that the entire 'Confessions' were designed to convey a narrative of my own experience as an opium-eater, drawn up with entire simplicity and fidelity to the facts, from which they can in no respect have deviated, except by such trifling inaccuracies of date, &c., as the memoranda I have with me in London would not in all cases enable me to reduce to certainty. Over and above the want of these memoranda, I laboured sometimes (as I will acknowledge) under another and a graver embarrassment. To tell nothing *but* the truth must, in all cases, be an unconditional moral law; to tell the *whole* truth is not equally so. In the earlier narrative I acknowledge that I could not always do this; regard of delicacy towards some who are yet living, and of just tenderness to the memory of others who are dead, obliged me, at various points of my narrative, to suppress what would have added interest to the story, and sometimes, perhaps, have left impressions on the reader favourable to other purposes of an autobiographer. In cases which touch too closely on their own rights and interests, all men should hesitate to hurt their own judgment; thus far I imposed a restraint upon myself, as all just and conscientious men would do; in everything else I spoke fearlessly, and as if writing private memoirs for my own dearest friends. Events, indeed, in my life, connected with so many remembrances of grief, and sometimes of self-reproach, had become too sacred from habitual con-

temptation to be altered or distorted for the unworthy purposes of scenical effect and display, without violating these feelings of self-respect which all men should cherish, and giving a lasting wound to my conscience.

“Having replied to the question involved in the passage quoted from the *Iris*, I ought to notice an objection conveyed to me through many channels, and in too friendly terms to have been overlooked, if I had thought it unfounded; whereas, I believe it is a very just one.—It is this: that I have so managed the second narrative as to leave an overbalance on the side of the *pleasures* of opium, and that the very horrors themselves, described as connected with the use of opium, do not pass the limit of pleasure.—I know not how to excuse myself on this head, unless by alleging (what is obvious enough) that to describe any pains, of any class, and that at perfect leisure for choosing and rejecting thoughts and expressions, is a most difficult task; in my case I scarcely know whether it is competent to me to allege further, that I was limited both as to space and time, so long as it appears on the face of my paper that I did not turn all that I had of either to the best account. It is known to you, however, that I wrote in extreme haste, and under very depressing circumstances in other respects.—On the whole, perhaps, the best way of meeting this objection will be to send you a third part of my ‘Confessions,’ drawn up with such assistance from fuller memoranda, and the recollections of my only companion during these years, as I shall be able to command on my return to the North. I hope that I shall be able to return thither in the course of next week; and, therefore, by the end of January or thereabouts, I shall have found leisure from my other employments to finish it to my own satisfaction. I do not venture to hope that it will realise the whole of what is felt to be wanting; but it is fit that I should make the effort, if it were only to meet the expressions of interest in my previous papers which have reached me from all quarters, or to mark my sense of the personal kindness which in many cases must have dictated the terms in which that interest was conveyed.

"This, I think, is what I had to say. Some things which I might have been disposed to add would not be fitting in a public letter. Let me say, however, generally, that these two papers of mine, short and inconsiderable as they are, have in one way produced a disproportionate result, though but of a personal nature, by leading to many kind acts and generous services and expressions of regard in many different shapes, from men of talents in London.

"To these hereafter I shall look back as to a fund of pleasant remembrances. Meantime, for the present, they have rendered me a service not less acceptable, by making my residence in London, in many respects, agreeable, at a time when, on other accounts, it should naturally have been otherwise.—I remain, Sir, your faithful friend and servant,

X. Y. Z.*

"LONDON, November 27, 1821.

"X. Y. Z." was the signature adopted by De Quincey for several of his less important contributions to the *London Magazine*. This third part of the "Confessions," of which he here gives an indefinite promise, never, however, did appear there.

De Quincey next contributed to the *London Magazine* a series of translations from the German, amongst them a version of Kant's essay on "National Character," also the translated essay on the "Rosicrucians and Freemasonry," and that most characteristic series of "Letters to a Young Man whose Education has been Neglected," in which he really managed to convey a scheme of liberal education

* Professor Masson in vol. iii. of "Collected Works" (Editor's Preface, p. 6) says, "As this letter is of considerable importance in connection with the history of De Quincey's famous publication, and has *never been reprinted hitherto* [italics are ours], place will be found for it in the Appendix." Professor Masson is in error; it was reprinted at length in the first edition (1877) of this Memoir (vol. i. pp. 246-250), together with the most striking passages in Mr. Montgomery's articles in the *Sheffield Iris*, which latter are in this edition rescinded, as, although they have no little interest and value in themselves, they are perhaps somewhat lengthy for the cheap edition of a memoir of De Quincey.

relieved by many touches of wit and humour. These letters furnished the occasion for one of Charles Lamb's most lively *jeux d'esprit*—the "Letter to an Old Man whose Education has been Neglected." We find Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd making this note :—

"Mr. De Quincey had commenced a series of letters to the *London Magazine*, 'To a Young Man whose Education has been Neglected,' as a vehicle for conveying miscellaneous information in his admirable style." Upon this hint, Lamb, with the assent which Mr. de Quincey could well afford to give, contributed a parody on the scheme in "A Letter to an Old Gentleman whose Education has been Neglected." And we find Lamb himself writing to Miss Hutchison :—"Mr. de Quincey's parody was submitted to him before being printed, and had his approbation." Lamb's essay is to be found among the collected "*Eliana*," but he prefixed to it, as it appeared in the magazine, the following letter to the editor :—

"DEAR SIR,—I send you a bantering 'Epistle to an Old Gentleman whose Education is Supposed to have been Neglected.' Of course, it was *suggested* by some letters of your admirable Opium-Eater; the discontinuance of which has caused so much regret to myself in common with most of your readers. You will do me injustice by supposing that in the remotest degree it was my intention to ridicule those papers. The fact is, the most serious things may give rise to an innocent burlesque; and the more serious they are, the fitter they become for that purpose. It is not to be supposed that Charles Cotton did not entertain a very high regard for 'Virgil,' notwithstanding he travestied that Poet. Yourself can testify the deep respect I have always held for the profound learning and penetrating genius of our friend. Nothing upon earth would give me greater pleasure than to find that he has not lost sight of his entertaining and instructing purpose.—I am, dear Sir, yours and *his*,
ELIA."

But the "Letters" were not resumed; the scheme

having probably been interrupted by the episode of "Walladmor," in which De Quincey's genius admirably justified itself in the way of practical joke. "Walladmor" was a novel got up in Germany to meet the demand for a new story from the pen of Sir Walter Scott, which that year was not forthcoming for the Easter Fair at Leipsic. De Quincey wrote an article on it in the *London Magazine* soon after its appearance; but, according to his statement, he formed too favourable an opinion of it at a hasty glance; and when asked by the publishers to translate it, he found the task harder than he had bargained for. But he would not be beaten; he made the German, as he says, only a groundwork, and "darned" it to his own wish. We may well assume, therefore, that there is more of De Quincey in the English version than there is of that German *hoaxer*, bold and inventive as he was. It is a pure parody and caricature of the excessive incident and mystery of "Guy Mannering," with Dirk Hatteraick sputtering Dutch-English, Meg Merrilees, and all; but now and then it becomes mawkish and weak in dialogue. It has very clever passages, and is most amusing when read with a lively eye to the great original.* But perhaps the cleverest portion of it was the "Dedication" to the "German Translator" which De Quincey prefixed to his version. We must make room for the closing passage of it here:—

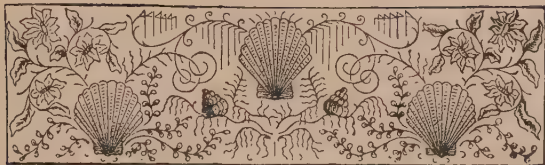
"Your chronology, by the way, was also damaged; but that has gone to the watchmaker's, and it is now regulated, so as to go as well as the Horse Guards. Now, finally, 'mine dear sare,' could you not translate me back into German, and darn me as I have darned you? But you must not 'sweat' me down in the same ratio that I have 'sweated' you; for if you do that, I fear that my dimensions will become invisible to any

* De Quincey himself in after-years gave a racy account of the whole affair in *Tait's Magazine*—an article which Messrs. Black reprinted in the sixteenth or supplementary volume of the (original) "Collected Writings," as from the *London Magazine* of 1824, which internal evidence tells it could not have been.

thick sight in Germany, and I shall present no mark to the critical enemy. Darn me into two portly volumes; and then, perhaps, I will translate you back again into English, and darn you with silk so hyper-lustrous that, were Dolly and Professor Kant to rise from the dead, Dolly should grow jealous of me, and the Professor confess himself more thoroughly puzzled and confounded, as to the matter of personal identity by the final 'Walladmor,' than ever he had been by the Cutlerian stockings. *Jusqu'au revoir*, my dear Principal, hoping you will soon invest me with that character in relation to yourself; and that you will then sign, as it is now *my* turn to sign, your obedient (but not very *faithful*) Translator."

To the *London Magazine* he also contributed articles on *Richter* and *Herder*, with specimens from their works, together with many notes and minor papers.





CHAPTER XVII.

CHARLES KNIGHT AND PROFESSOR WILSON.

IN spite of all De Quincey's efforts, however, it would seem that in 1825 he had not been able to extricate himself from debt and difficulty; and that now, even supposing it had been in his power to run north oftener than had been his wont since he had begun his literary campaign in 1821, he was exiled from Westmoreland, and compelled to go into a kind of hiding from creditors. In February 1825 we find him writing from London to Professor Wilson, respecting a work on Education by Mr. Hill,* whose brothers were engaged in some school experiment at Hazelwood in Warwickshire, and he concludes this with personal reference:—

“As to myself—though I have written not as one who labours under much depression of mind—the fact is, I *do* so. At this time calamity presses upon me with a heavy hand; I am quite free of opium, but it has left the liver, which is the Achilles' heel of almost every human fabric, subject to affections which are tremendous for the weight of wretchedness attached to them. To fence with these with the one hand, and with the other to maintain the war with the wretched business of hack-

* The work here referred to is, “Plans for the Government and Liberal Instruction of Boys in Large Numbers, drawn from Experience.” 8vo. London, 1823.

author, with all its horrible degradations, is more than I am able to bear. At this moment I have not a place to hide my head in. Something I meditate—I know not what. ‘Itaque e conspectu omnium abiit.’ With a good publisher, and liberty to premeditate what I write, I might yet liberate myself: after which, having paid everybody, I would slink into some dark corner—educate my children—and show my face in the world no more.

“If you should ever have occasion to write to me, it will be best to address your letter either to the care of Mrs. de Quincey, Rydal Nab, Westmoreland (Fox Ghyll* is sold, and will be given up in a few days), or to the care of M. D. Hill, Esq., 11 King’s Bench Walk, Temple; but, for the present, I think rather to the latter, for else suspicions will arise that I am in Westmoreland, which, if I were not, might be serviceable to me; but—if, as I am in hopes of accomplishing sooner or later, I should be—might defeat my purpose.”

Mrs. Gordon adds the following note to this letter with regard to the statement contained in it that he “was free of opium:”—“To the last he asserted this; but the habit, though modified, was never abandoned.” She is wrong as to his assertions: he positively tells, with iteration, that though he had frequently fancied himself free of the habit, it reasserted its power over him up to a certain extent. It is abundantly clear that Mrs. Gordon wrote without having read, at all events with sufficient care, the final edition of the “Confessions,” which, considering everything, she should have done.

Another very important friendship of this London period was that formed with Charles Knight, who was then engaged with his *Quarterly Magazine*. He asked De Quincey to write in it; and several of his articles and translations from the German appeared there. In his “*Passages of a Working Life*,” Mr. Knight gives a pretty full, though unfortunately a some-

* Fox Ghyll was a little cottage which, owing to the increase of family and of books, Mr. de Quincey had some time before taken on lease. Rydal Nab, as has already been said, was the residence of his wife’s father, where she then was.

what disconnected, account of their intercourse, which was close and intimate. De Quincey during some months resided in Mr. Knight's house in Pall Mall, East. Mr. Knight says:—

“In July 1824 I had become acquainted with Mr. de Quincey, and he had contributed to the *Quarterly Magazine* a slight translation from the German, though as to the strict fidelity of the translation I might have had considerable doubts. He could not go about this sort of work without improving all he touched.”

Mr. Knight describes a visit which he had paid to De Quincey at his lodging whilst he was in the toils with “Walladmor,” and we have this reminiscence:—“I saw him groaning over his uncongenial labour, by which he eventually got very little. It was projected to appear in three volumes. He despairingly wrote to me: ‘After weeding out the forests of rubbish, I believe it will make only one decent volume.’”

Mr. Knight thus notes some characteristics, and illustrates them by incidents:—

“Vast as were his acquirements, intuitive as was his appreciation of character and the motives of human actions, unembarrassed as was his demeanour, pleasant and even mirthful his table-talk, De Quincey was as helpless in every position of responsibility as when he paced ‘stony-hearted Oxford Street’ looking for the lost one. He was constantly beset by idle fears and vain imaginings. His sensitiveness was so extreme, in combination with the almost ultra-courtesy of a gentleman, that he hesitated to trouble a servant with any personal requests without a long prefatory apology. My family were in the country in the summer of 1825, when he was staying at my house in Pall Mall, East. A friend or two had met him at dinner, and I had walked part of the way home with one of them. When I returned, I tapped at his chamber-door to bid him good-night. He was sitting at the open window habited as a prize-fighter when he enters the ring. ‘You will take cold,’ I exclaimed. ‘Where is your shirt?’ ‘I have not a shirt—my shirts are unwashed.’ ‘But why

not tell the servant to send them to the laundress?' 'Ah! how could I presume to do that in Mrs. Knight's absence?'

"One more illustration of the eccentricity of De Quincey. I had been to Windsor; on my return I was told that Mr. de Quincey had taken his box away, leaving word that he was gone home. I knew that he was waiting for a remittance from his mother, which would satisfy some clamorous creditors and enable him to rejoin his family at Grasmere. Two or three days after, I heard that he was still in town. I obtained a clue to his lodging, and found him in a miserable place on the Surrey side of Waterloo Bridge. He had received a large draft on a London banker at twenty-one days' sight. He summoned courage to go to Lombard Street, and was astonished to learn that he could not obtain the amount till the draft became due. A man of less sensitive feelings would have returned to Pall Mall, East, and have there waited securely and comfortably till I came. How to frame his apology to our trusty domestic was the difficulty that sent him into the den where I found him. He produced the draft to me from out of his Bible, which he thought was the best hiding-place. 'Come to me to-morrow morning and I will give you the cash.' 'What? How? Can such a thing be possible? Can the amount be got before the draft is due?' 'Never fear; come you, and then get home as fast as you can.' . . .

"We were all truly sorry to part with this valued friend, whose eccentricity made him even more dear to us—whose helplessness under the direst pressure of want of means brought no feeling of contempt, for his abilities and learning commanded our reverence. We scarcely knew then what he had to endure during his London sojourn."

It is very easy to foresee that a nature such as this would find itself in very odd and exceptional positions on the way through the world,—positions apt to be misunderstood, and often made to bear a sinister aspect by the vulgar-minded.

In the end of 1825 he wrote to Mr. Knight from Westmoreland:—"Anxiety, long continued with me of late years, in consequence of my opium-shattering, seizes on some frail part about the stomach, and produces a specific complaint which very soon abolishes all power of thinking at all."

Recalling the fascination of his talk at that time, Mr. Knight writes:—

"‘Oh for one hour of Dundee!’—one hour of De Quincey! Better three hours, from nine till midnight, for a rapt listener to be ‘under the wand of the magician,’ spellbound by his wonderful affluence of talk, such as that of the fairy whose lips dropped rubies and diamonds. Many a night have I, with my wife by my side, sat listening to the equable flow of his discourse, both of us utterly forgetting the usual regularity of our habits, and hearing the drowsy watchman’s ‘Past one o’clock’ (for the old watchman then walked his round) before we parted."

Mr. Knight further enlightens us as to later intercourse:—

"I occasionally had a warm-hearted letter from him, but our correspondence after a year or two ceased. I was delighted at its renewal in July 1829, when he wrote me the most pressing invitation from Mrs. de Quincey and himself to come with my wife and children to visit them. In this letter he says:—‘And now, my friend, think what a glorious Eldorado of milk and butter, and cream-cheeses, and all other dairy products, supposing that you like those things, I can offer you morning, noon, and night. You may absolutely bathe in new milk, or even in cream; and you *shall* bathe, if you like it. I know that you care not much about the luxuries of the dinner-table; else, though our luxuries are few and simple, I could offer you some temptations—mountain lamb equal to Welsh; char famous to the antipodes; trout and pike from the very lake within twenty-five feet of our door; bread, such as you have never presumed to dream of, made of our own wheat, not doctored and separated by the usual miller’s process

into fine insipid flour and coarse, that is, merely dirty-looking white, but all ground down together, which is the sole receipt (*experto crede*) for having rich, lustrous, red-brown ambrosial bread; new potatoes of celestial earthiness and raciness, which with us last to October; and finally, milk, milk, milk—cream, cream, cream (hear it, thou benighted Londoner!), in which you must and shall bathe.”

Among the other notable personages he met in London at this period was “Walking Stewart,” whom he has fitly celebrated. With his excessive abstinence, his hatred of reading, his systematic attention to hours and to exercise; above all, with his expressive dislike to religion generally, and to the Christian religion in particular, Walking Stewart could not but have frequently offended De Quincey with his outbursts. In fact, there was unmistakably a vein of madness in the man. Yet De Quincey proceeds to qualify and to render him tolerant justice.

That De Quincey's fame was rapidly growing is proved by various circumstances—more particularly the demands made upon him by editors here and there. Another evidence, though perhaps not quite so convincing, he was somewhat inconsistently introduced as an interlocutor in the “Noctes Ambrosianæ” by Wilson, who, however, never succeeded in catching but the faintest echo of De Quincey's manner of talking.

In the end of 1825, whilst De Quincey still remained in Westmoreland, we find Professor Wilson addressing to him the following letter:—

“GLOUCESTER PLACE, EDINBURGH,
November 12th, 1825.

“MY DEAR PLATO,—Mrs. Wilson is in good health. I am most anxiously expecting your communications; without them JANUS will be afraid to look the public in the face. Do, I earnestly beseech you, send me *as much as you can*, and if possible without delay. I am not without hope that your lucubrations may at this moment be crossing the Border. The press is stopped, and I

cannot think of sending to it bad or indifferent articles till I am forced to prove that your effectual aid is not to be given in this extremity. I am naturally anxious about the volume, because, if an annual, it can yield you fifty guineas (and myself), without interference with any other more important objects. I shall not proceed till I hear from you; and a few days more, say a week, must be allowed, rather than lose your contributions.

"I wish earnestly that you would read Brown and Welsh as soon as you can. I have undertaken to write a review of the lectures for the first number of the *Quarterly*, edited by Lockhart; and with your assistance (to be acknowledged in the way of business, and felt in the way of friendship) a creditable article may surely be composed. Lockhart's dynasty begins with the resignation of John Coleridge, after next number, and he is naturally anxious about his *début*.

"There seem to be several distinct topics for a review of Brown: first, the introductory lectures, containing his view of the mode of studying the human mind, which seemed to me ingenious, and perhaps true, although, to your more instructed intelligence, they may seem otherwise. Secondly, his distribution of the subject generally into sensations, notions, and feelings of relation. I now speak vaguely; but there he conceives his chief merit and decided originality to lie: it is his system. Thirdly, what is his theory of the moral feeling or faculty? Many other subjects there are discussed by him; but on these three especially would I wish to have your matured and reasoned opinion. Of course I shall be happy to have your opinion on any other or every other part of his philosophy.

"I need not say to you that a certain moderated tone must be assumed by every writer in the *Quarterly*. You know what that is, and how to strike that tone on a different instrument from that generally sounded. I have begun to write upon the work; and should you think it safe to assist me, and to confide your views to such hands, I do not despair of being able to interweave them with my own in a way not unsatisfactory to your

mind. Of course the whole article would be submitted to you before publication. Should you tell me that you will engage in this, I will write you a fuller letter without loss of time.

"Lockhart will doubtless for some time—perhaps always—be somewhat fettered in his will, but I know how happy he will be to have your assistance. He knows your great talents, and will, I know, act in the most gentlemanly spirit to all contributors. A noble review of Kant would, in good time, be valuable to him and you; and, master as you are of German literature and philosophy, I do indeed hope that you may become a contributor. I have engaged to do all I can in my narrower department. John Paul should certainly now have justice done him; and he is a writer respecting whom it is not likely any difference of opinion should exist between you and Lockhart.

"It will make me truly happy to hear from you as often as the spirit moves you. Thank God you are not now domineered over by circumstances, and may your noble nature never more be disturbed but by its own workings!

"I begin now to believe that you are a political economist. Would that Ricardo had not been a Jew!

"Hartley Coleridge has given me some very good things for JANUS. But do not damn his godship.

"I hope Mrs. de Quincey is well, and that your handsome boy is about to lay down his crutches. I write you in a garret overlooking a thousand smoky chimneys, but there is a blue sky and a gleam of the sea. The watery whirlwinds on Rydalmere must have been in full feather during these high blasts.

"Do not be teased with my importunities, but attribute them partly to selfish and partly to friendly motives.—I am, my dear De Quincey, your most sincere friend,

JOHN WILSON."



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE STRUGGLE MAINTAINED.

THE position in which De Quincey found himself at the beginning of 1826 almost overpowered him. "It seemed to him," he said, "as though the sunlight would never visit him again: as though he could creep into any unvisited and unblessed cellar, and never see the face of friend or foe any more." He had returned to London; and the sense of exile from his Westmoreland cottage, and from his children, chilled his energies and cramped his powers of production. Wilson had said seriously, that if De Quincey owed a five-pound note and were unable to pay it, it would vex him more than debts of thousands would vex many other men rolling about in their carriages. He was likely, therefore, to sympathise with the deep depression of De Quincey's letters, and to do what he could to remove the cause. He was able to send a response that relieved the gloom; it was an offer of such a sum for a series of articles for *Blackwood* as would in the meantime mitigate matters, and so far set De Quincey's mind free to write. The result was the publication in *Maga* of that valuable series of papers titled the "Gallery of the German Prose Writers," which was opened in the number for November 1826 with the article on Lessing. That was followed in February 1827 by one on the "Last Days of Kant," and later by others. He was enabled

by this timely engagement, and by slight contributions which he continued to make to the *London Magazine* and other journals, to maintain his Westmoreland cottage. For the next two years the best products of his pen went into the pages of *Maga*. The most conspicuous of these contributions were "Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts," which appeared in the end of 1827, and "The Toilette of the Hebrew Lady," in 1828.

This connection with Edinburgh led him seriously to think of another effort at settlement there. He accordingly went to Edinburgh in the end of 1828, to occupy Wilson's rooms for a short time whilst he was at Ellera. It was at this time that De Quincey wrote the bulk of the articles which appeared in 1828, 1829, and 1830 in the *Edinburgh Literary Gazette*, from one of which Mrs. Gordon, in her life of her father, has made lengthened extracts. At this time, too, he entered into a new engagement with Blackwood. Whether he had been influenced by a long letter written by Miss Wordsworth for Mrs. de Quincey, his decision was in conformity with advice tendered, as will be seen from the following extracts :—

"RYDAL MOUNT, *Thursday, November 16th.*

"MY DEAR SIR,—A letter of good tidings respecting Mrs. de Quincey and your family cannot, I am sure, be unwelcome ; and, besides, she assures me that you will be glad to hear of my safe return to Rydal after a nine months' absence. I called at your cottage yesterday, having first seen your son William at the head of the schoolboys,—as it might seem, a leader of their noontide games ; and Horace among the tribe, both as healthy-looking as the best, and William very much grown. Margaret was in the kitchen, preparing to follow her brothers to school, and I was pleased to see her also looking stout and well, and much grown. Mrs. de Quincey was seated by the fire above-stairs with her baby on her knee. She rose and received me cheerfully, as a person in perfect health, and does indeed seem to have had an extraordinary recovery, and as little suffering as

could be expected. The babe looks as if it would thrive, and is what we call a nice child. . . .

"Mrs. de Quincey seemed on the whole in very good spirits, but, with something of sadness in her manner, she told me you were not likely very soon to be at home. She then said that you had at present some literary employments at Edinburgh, and had, besides, had an offer (or something to this effect) of a permanent engagement, the nature of which she did not know, but that you hesitated about accepting it, as it might necessitate you to settle in Edinburgh. To this I replied, 'Why not settle there, for the time, at least, that this engagement lasts? Lodgings are cheap at Edinburgh, and provisions and coals not dear. Of these facts I had some weeks' experience four years ago.' I then added that it was my firm opinion that you could never regularly keep up to your engagements at a distance from the press, and said I, 'Pray tell him so when you write.' She replied, 'Do write yourself.' Now, I could not refuse to give her pleasure by so doing, especially being assured that my letter would not be wholly worthless to you, having such agreeable news to send of your family.

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"I do not presume to take the liberty of advising the acceptance of this engagement or of that, only I would venture to request you well to consider the many impediments to literary employments to be regularly carried on in limited time at a distance from the press in a small house and in perfect solitude. You must well know that it is a true and faithful concern for your interests and those of your family that prompts me to call your attention to this point; and if you think that I am mistaken, you will not, I am sure, take it ill that I have thus freely expressed my opinion.

"It gave me great pleasure to hear of your good health and spirits, and you, I am sure, will be glad to have good accounts of all our family, except poor Dora, who has been very ill indeed,—dangerously ill; but now, thank God, she is gaining ground, I hope, daily. Her

extreme illness was during my absence, and I was, therefore, spared great anxiety, for I did not know of it till she was convalescent. I was, however, greatly shocked by her sickly looks. They improve, however, visibly, and she gains strength and has a good appetite. Whenever weather permits she rides on horseback. My brother's eyes are literally quite well. This surely is a great blessing, and I hope we are sufficiently thankful for it. He reads aloud to us by candlelight, and uses the pen for himself. My poor sister is a little worn by anxiety for Dora, but in other respects looks as well as usual. . . .

"I cannot express how happy I am to find myself at home again after so long an absence, though my time has passed very agreeably, and my health been excellent. I have had many very long walks since my return, and am more than ever charmed with our rocks and mountains. Rich autumnal tints, with an intermixture of green ones, still linger on the trees.

"My brother and sister do not know of my writing, otherwise they would send their remembrances.

"Make my respects to Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Wilson ; and believe me, dear Sir, yours affectionately,

"D. WORDSWORTH.

"*P.S.*—Excuse a very bad pen and haste."

"*1 o'clock, Thursday.*—I have been at Grasmere, and again seen your wife. She desires me to say that she is particularly anxious to hear from you on her father's account. The newspaper continues to come directed to my brother, though, some time since, my brother wrote to request that it might not. The new editor, no doubt, however, wished to continue the connection with you ; but we think that it would be much better that Mrs. de Quincey should write to order it not to be sent, at least until your return to Grasmere, especially as at present you are not likely to contribute anything to the paper. She agrees with me in thinking it right so to do, and will write to the editor unless you order to the contrary.

Perhaps you will write yourself. Pray mention this matter when you next write to her."

These arrangements it was, probably, that led him shortly after this to bring his elder children, William and Margaret, to Edinburgh for the sake of superior education. They were taken under charge for a time by Captain Hamilton (Cyril Thornton) and his wife, who were unremitting in their kindness and attention.

We find Charles Sumner writing to George Hillard on January 23, 1839:—

"You will doubtless read the last *Tait's Magazine*. It contains the first of a series of articles by De Quincey on Wordsworth. Poor De Quincey had a small fortune of eight or nine thousand pounds, which he has lost or spent, and now he lets his pen for hire. You know his articles on Coleridge. Wordsworth's turn has come now. At the close of the article he alludes to a killing neglect which he once received from the poet, and which embittered his peace. I know the facts which are not given. De Quincey married some humble country girl in the neighbourhood of Wordsworth; she was of good character, but not of that rank in which Wordsworth moved. The family of the latter never made her acquaintance or showed her any civilities, though living comparatively in the same neighbourhood. *Hinc illæ lacrymæ*. When you read De Quincey's lamentations, you may thus better understand them."*

The following, which was never reprinted by De Quincey himself, is the passage referred to—Professor Wilson being coupled with himself in the first part of it:—

"Did it ask no courage to come forward, in the first character, as solitary friends, holding up our protesting hands, amidst a wilderness of chattering buffoons? Did it ask no magnanimity to stand firmly to the post we had assumed, not passively acquiescing in the new state of public opinion, but exulting in it and aiding it, long

after we had reason to think ourselves injuriously treated? Times are changed : it needs no courage, in the year of our Lord 1839, to discover and proclaim a great poet in William Wordsworth ; it needed none in the year 1815 to discover a frail power in the French ' empire, or an idol of clay and brass in the French Emperor.' " And then, after having maintained for Wordsworth an " unimpeachable integrity," he goes on to say that there are cases of wrong for which the conscience is not the competent tribunal, and thus sums up the whole matter :—

"The case of a man who for years has identified himself closely with the domestic griefs and joys of another, over and above his primary service of giving him the strength and encouragement of a profound literary sympathy, at a time of universal scowling from the world ; suppose this man to fall into a situation in which, from want of natural connections and from his state of insulation in life, it might be most important to his feelings that some support should be lent him by a family having a known place and acceptance, and what may be called a root in the country, by means of connection, descent, and long settlement. To look for this might be a most humble demand on the part of one who had testified his devotion in the way supposed. To some it might. But enough. I murmur not ; complaint is weak at all times ; and the hour is passed irrevocably and by many a year, in which an act of friendship so natural, and costing so little (in both senses so priceless), could have been availing. *The ear is deaf that should have been solaced by the sound of welcome. Call, but you will not be heard ; shout aloud, but your ' Ave !' and ' All hail !' will now tell only as an echo of departed days, proclaiming the hollowness of human hopes.*"

But Mr. Sumner, who "knew the facts well," did not know all, else he would, in justice, have made one exception in speaking of the Wordsworth family as never having made Mrs. de Quincey's acquaintance or showed her any civilities. From the letters we have given it is quite clear, reading between the lines, that the good,

wise, kindly Dorothy endeavoured to play the peace-maker; and, that failing, she quietly took her own way to help and show friendly feeling. She visited Mrs. de Quincey so long as she remained in Grasmere, though probably in a kind of secret or underhand way, at any rate towards the end, and did many a little service, as we have seen, to her and the children. Wordsworth said that "he did not believe her tenderness of heart was ever surpassed by any of God's creatures—her loving kindness had no bounds." And we believe it. Her constant mental occupation, combined with the hard household work she undertook, and the strain implied in her efforts at pedestrianism for her brother's sake, laid, no doubt, the fatal seeds of the illness which issued finally in her sad mental alienation. From 1832, when she had this severe illness, until 1855, when she died, she never recovered her mental powers—her spring and elasticity were gone; and very pathetic is the picture drawn for us by several hands of Wordsworth dragging her about the garden in her invalid-chair, fearful that any visitors should suddenly appear and behold the wreck she had then become.

Though in many points De Quincey's habits and feelings were far removed from those of ordinary men, his love for his children was close and tender. They were always in his thoughts; and what added the sharpest sting, when he recalled lost chances and possibilities thrown away, was the consciousness that they might suffer. The thought of them, and of possible privations for them, braced him up to new efforts when he might have helplessly succumbed. After a certain age, as we shall learn by-and-by, his sons never had any tutor but their father.





CHAPTER XIX.

CARLYLE AND DE QUINCEY.

THE relations of two such masters as Carlyle and De Quincey could not but be interesting—the more that they were in some things perfect contrasts to each other. But the relation has the superadded interest of opening at certain points the strangest questions as to the ethics of personal conviction and sincerity in literature—questions which, though somewhat painful in their unexpectedness in connection with a “great Teacher” and “moral force” like Carlyle, as Goethe called him, have surely an importance beyond all private and personal concerns and feelings, and touch at the very root the truths that Carlyle so long publicly and ostentatiously proclaimed. These meet us at the very outset of the connection of the two men. Carlyle, so far as we know, first heard of De Quincey, or at least first realised his existence, by that notice of the translation of “*Wilhelm Meister*” in the *London Magazine*. Carlyle’s verdict on that bit of work was, that it was the “attack of a luckless wight of an opium-eater, full of vulgar spite and commonplace philosophy, with a laudanum-bottle in his pocket and the venom of a wasp in his heart.” What is our surprise to read in those “early letters” of Carlyle, which perhaps a too facile worship of a great man, or else a fatal fear that the slightest record

of him or its results should be lost, has saved for us, that for a long time he himself held and expressed the very same opinion as De Quincey about "*Wilhelm Meister*." Here is a bit from a letter to his brother while he was engaged in the work of translating it:—

"Meanwhile I go on with '*Wilhelm Meister*,'—a book which I love not. . . . There are touches of the very highest, most ethereal genius in it; but diluted with floods of insipidity, which even I would not have written for the world. Some of the poetry is very bad, some of it rather good. When I read of players and libidinous actresses and their sorry pasteboard apparatus for beautifying and enlivening the '*moral world*,' I render it into grammatical English with a feeling mild and charitable as that of a starving hyæna. . . . Goethe is the greatest genius that has lived for a century, and the greatest ass that has lived for three. I could sometimes fall down and worship him, and at other times I could kick him out of the room."

Pretty good that for a translator—fancy the much-worshipped Goethe reading that! And he goes on to say that he could not, out of self-respect, issue the book without a "*fierce preface*," disclaiming all concern with the literary and moral merit of the book. . . . What a work! Bushels of dust and straw and feathers, with here and there a diamond of purest water." Yes; fancy the much-worshipped Goethe reading that from his English admirer and disciple!

Instead of a "*fierce preface*" protesting, as was threatened, there was the mildest possible piece of flunkeyism; but even after this our sage and mentor could write to his brother:—

"Really it is a most mixed performance, and though intellectually good, much of it is morally bad. It is making way here perhaps, but slowly: a second edition seems a dubious matter. No difference! I have the produce of the first lying here beside me in hard notes of the Bank of England!"

A man of very fine critical temper, not to speak of sincere and generous mind, would have allowed that De

Quincey had only uttered his own private convictions, and if he did not quite keep silence, would have forborne to assail him for doing what was thus, on his own showing, exactly right. A man of real good nature, and of true heartfelt honest humour, would have written and said:—"My dear fellow, you have exactly expressed my sentiments, as I have over and over again set them down in letters to my folks at home—that is the fun of the situation, really; but in this world of cross-purposes and silly chatterers what is a man to do? Work that I would have liked better, the reading public—that mixture of crude oil and gin-and-water, where the oil will float on the top and disgust you before you get down to the better liquor—very creamy indeed!—would have none of. When next I am up in town you must come and meet me, and we shall have a chat and a chop together; and discuss with a good laugh the great Goethe and that very creamy reading public over some liquor more and yet not so creamy.—Always yours, as an honest appreciator of a cunning interpreter of my own private views,

"THOMAS CARLYLE."

But in all seriousness it is surely not too much to ask to what the wonderful transformation was due. Did the dross become gold under the mere touch of Thomas Carlyle's hand? Did "the bushels of dust and straw and feathers" weigh the heavier and disclose more diamonds through his sifting? Did the sordid paraphernalia of the libidinous actresses become translated into divine and witching poetry when he had rendered it into English—not pausing even over phrases which no other English translator has ventured to render? Or did he gradually and in vanity fall in love with his own work, and betray the very weakness with which he had for years gone on crediting all the literary world besides himself? Or did self-interest stand for anything in the business? He did his best to write down Scott: he did his best to write up Goethe—was there anything even in our great mentor, our Chelsea sage, of the conscious turning round and bowing to the rising sun, even though dingy and

dirt-obscurd according to his own first impressions? These are not so much questions for us to answer as for his unqualified admirers and apologists.

In spite, however, of all the sneers, Carlyle was fond enough to make De Quincey's acquaintance and to cultivate him. He had met the Opium-Eater at Professor Wilson's and other friends', and he was invited to Comely Bank when the Carlyles were there—"came," says Mr. Froude, "penitent for his article on Wilhelm Meister," which, however, he revised and reprinted in his "*Collected Works*." Many friendly and mutual good offices were done by Mrs. Carlyle for De Quincey and by De Quincey for Mrs. Carlyle at this time, the recollection of which seem dimly suggested in the letter to follow—and to these it would be unfair and ungenerous not to refer. It is evident, too, from Mr. Carlyle's own records, that after he once got to know De Quincey he was certainly as anxious for De Quincey's society as De Quincey was for his. On one occasion he called at De Quincey's lodgings after midday, to find him still in bed—on which a sardonic remark is made; with no consideration or allowance for the fact that, as De Quincey's daughter tells us, his one chance of producing anything worth speaking of was between nine o'clock at night and four or five o'clock in the morning. Surely it is the least that can be required of one who in letters protests himself a friend that *he* should give the best constructions, and not persistently record the worst ones. So it is proved that Carlyle called upon De Quincey when it seems De Quincey was either not prepared or not inclined to see him, while all the time Carlyle was making the most disparaging entries in his commonplace books, and unfriendly references in letters to his friends. It is in evidence that, though De Quincey was the first to introduce him to Jean Paul, he could turn round and taunt De Quincey with knowing as little of Jean Paul as he did of Goethe—surely an odd way for an intellectual and a sincere man to show his gratitude; though he succeeded in turning Jean Paul to pretty fair account too, in "*hard notes of the Bank of England!*"—the more that, it seems, he did

not, in his private views, quite believe in Jean Paul to the extent that he would have had the public to believe he did. The doctrine of "reserve" seems to have gone a good way with Thomas Carlyle, as it did with Loyola and the Jesuits he so disliked. But if there is to be anything of "sincerity" in literature, such bold divorce between the "private view" and the impression given to the public will not be found to favour it.

And then, only think of the man who had indulged in such entries in his diaries, and in his letters to friends, writing to the subject of them such a letter as we shall give below—pressing on him friendly, even brotherly invitations which he never accepted—and even after this date indulging himself in the same pastime of unkindly sneering private record. Surely Thomas Carlyle was not quite what his own diaries and letters would prove him to have been; there must be something more of revelation yet to come; for we cannot believe him so utterly void of charity—that chief of the Christian graces—and so given over to some of the worst habits and tendencies he so persistently lashed and sneered at in other people.

It is not, it cannot be, a grateful task to unveil repellent traits and tendencies in a great man who has done much to instruct and to benefit us; but then there are others besides Thomas Carlyle who claim bare justice at the hands of those who are left behind; and over and above all this, there remains that question of sincerity and common honesty in written utterance which holds alike for the great and the small, for the first man of letters of his day as for the lowest. Even "the Blackguard Heine" could hardly have treated a "friend" more scurvily than Carlyle did De Quincey, and in Heine's diatribes there would have been at least something to excite a smile or to raise a laugh; which small redeeming point is not present in Thomas Carlyle's ill-natured records. But here is the letter we have spoken of:—

"CRAIGENPUTTOCH, 11th December 1828.

"MY DEAR SIR,—Having the opportunity of a frank, I cannot resist the temptation to send you a few lines, were

it only to signify that two well-wishers of yours are still alive in these remote moors, and often thinking of you with the old friendly feelings. My wife encourages me in this innocent purpose: she has learned lately that you were inquiring for her of some female friend; nay, even promising to visit us here—a fact of the most interesting sort to both of us. I am to say, therefore, that your presence at this fireside will diffuse no ordinary gladness over all members of the household; that our warmest welcome, and such solacements as even the desert does not refuse, are at any time and at all times in store for one we love so well. Neither is this expedition so impracticable. We lie but a short way out of your direct route to Westmoreland; communicate by gravelled roads with Dumfries and other places in the habitable globe. Were you to warn us of your approach, it might all be made easy enough. And then such a treat it would be to hear the sound of philosophy and literature in the hitherto quite savage wolds, where since the creation of the world no such music, scarcely even articulate speech, had been uttered or dreamed of! Come, therefore, come and see us; for we often long after you. Nay, I can promise, too, that we are almost a unique sight in the British Empire; such a quantity of German periodicals and mystic speculation embosomed in plain Scottish *Peat-moor* being nowhere else that I know of to be met with.

"In idle hours we sometimes project founding a sort of colony here, to be called the 'Misanthropic Society;' the settlers all to be men of a certain philosophic depth, and intensely sensible of the present state of literature; each to have his own cottage, encircled with roses or thistles as he might prefer; a library and pantry within, and huge stack of turf-fuel without; fenced off from his neighbours by fir woods, and, when he pleased, by cast-metal railing, so that each might feel himself strictly an individual, and free as a son of the wilderness; but the whole settlement to meet weekly over coffee, and there unite in their *Miserere*, or what were better, hurl forth their defiance, pity, expostulation, over the whole uni-

verse, civil, literary, and religious. I reckon this place a much fitter site for such an establishment than your Lake Country—a region abounding in natural beauty, but blown on by coach-horns, betrotten by picturesque tourists, and otherwise exceedingly desecrated by too frequent resort; whereas here, though still in communication with the manufacturing world, we have a solitude altogether Druidical—grim hills tenanted chiefly by the wild grouse, tarns and brooks that have soaked and slumbered unmolested since the Deluge of Noah, and nothing to disturb you with speech, except Arcturus and Orion, and the Spirit of Nature, in the heaven and in the earth, as it manifests itself in anger or love, and utters its inexplicable tidings, unheard by the mortal ear. But the misery is the almost total want of colonists! Would *you* come hither and be king over us; *then* indeed we had made a fair beginning, and the ‘Bog School’ might snap its fingers at the ‘Lake School’ itself, and hope to be one day recognised of all men.

“But enough of this fooling. Better were it to tell you in plain prose what little can be said of my own welfare, and inquire in the same dialect after yours. It will gratify you to learn that here, in the desert, as in the crowded city, I am moderately active and well; better in health, not worse; and though active only on the small scale, yet in my own opinion honestly, and to as much result as has been usual with me at any time. We have horses to ride on, gardens to cultivate, tight walls and strong fires to defend us against winter; books to read, paper to scribble on; and no man or thing, at least in this visible earth, to make us afraid; for I reckon that so securely sequestered are we, not only would no Catholic rebellion, but even no new Hengist and Horsa invasion, in anywise disturb our tranquillity. True, we have no society; but who has, in the strict sense of that word? I have never had any worth speaking much about since I came into this world: in the next, it may be, they will order matters better. Meanwhile, if we have not the *wheat* in great quantity, we are nearly altogether free from the *chaff*, which often in this matter is highly

annoying to weak nerves. My wife and I are busy learning Spanish; far advanced in *Don Quixote* already. I purpose writing mystical *Reviews* for somewhat more than a twelvemonth to come; have Greek to read, and the whole universe to study (for I understand less and less of it); so that here as well as elsewhere I find that a man may '*dree his weird*' (serve out his earthly apprenticeship) with reasonable composure, and wait what the flight of years may bring him, little disappointed (unless he is a fool) if it bring him mere *nothing* save what he has already—a body and a soul—more cunning and costly treasures than all Golconda and Potosi could purchase for him. What would the vain worm, man, be at? Has he not a head, to speak of nothing else—a head (be it *with* a hat or without one) full of far richer things than Windsor Palace, or the Brighton Teapot added to it? What are all Dresden picture-galleries and magazines *des arts et des métiers* to the strange painting and thrice wonderful and thrice precious workmanship that goes on under the cranium of a beggar? What *can* be added to him or taken from him by the hatred or love of all men? The grey paper or the white silk paper in which the gold ingot is wrapped; the gold is inalienable; *he* is the gold. But truce also to this moralising. I had a thousand things to ask concerning you: your employments, purposes, sufferings, and pleasures. Will you not write to me? Will you not come to me and tell? Believe it, you are well loved here, and none feels better than I what a spirit is for the present eclipsed in clouds. For the present it can only be; time and chance are for all men; that troublous season will end; and one day with more joyful, not deeper or truer regard, I shall see you 'yourself again.' Meanwhile, pardon me this intrusion; and write, if you have a vacant hour which you would fill with a good action. Mr. Jeffrey is still anxious to know you; has he ever succeeded? We are not to be in Edinburgh, I believe, till spring; but I will send him a letter to you (with your permission) by the first conveyance. Remember me with best regards to Professor Wilson and Sir W. Hamilton, neither of whom must

forget me ; not omitting the honest Gordon, who I know will not.

“The bearer of this letter is Henry Inglis, a young gentleman of no ordinary talent and worth, in whom, as I believe, *es steckt gar viel*. Should he call himself, pray let this be an introduction, for he reverences all spiritual worth, and you also will learn to love him.—With all friendly sentiments, I am ever, my dear Sir, most faithfully yours,

T. CARLYLE.”





CHAPTER XX.

TAIT AND BLACKWOOD—KLOSTERHEIM.

BESIDES the contributions to the *Literary Gazette* already named, De Quincey wrote for *Blackwood*, about this time, the more important essay titled, "Dr. Parr and his Contemporaries ; or, Whiggism in its Relations to Literature," one of his most thoughtful, original, and finished productions. He never returned to Grasmere, for in 1830 he was joined in Edinburgh by Mrs. de Quincey and the younger children. To a man of De Quincey's sensitive and brooding temperament, to whom places inevitably became closely associated with the memories of joy and sorrow, it might well befall that Westmoreland was no longer fitted to be the pleasant home it had been. Friends had passed ; and the solitude which he had often sought now became over-populous with ghostly presences. Other considerations, too, which had once been all-powerful in favour of the Westmoreland domicile and headquarters, had now in some measure ceased to have force. Mrs. de Quincey had clung to her native vale for reasons other than mere sentimental love of it ; she was near to her father and family, for one thing ; and when weighing the advantages and disadvantages of separation, at the time her husband set forth for London, she had come to the conclusion that for the sake of the children Westmoreland was at least more healthy than London could be ; whereas a removal

of all the family there might only have the effect of hampering and tying her husband to a poverty-stricken, squalid locality. Staying where she was, at cost of much anxiety and self-denial, would serve two purposes—keep the children in the sweet country air, and preserve a corner to which her husband could retire for rest and change as often as his engagements would allow. But such considerations as had weighed against a transfer of the family to London ceased to have force in favour of the maintenance of the Westmoreland home—much prized as it had been through a lifetime—when a settlement had been made in Edinburgh. Some of his earlier friends there had already passed away, or had removed to other places; but there was Wilson in the height of his fame, and the circle which he had gathered round him had grown. There could be no lack of society; De Quincey was likely to have more of it than he would either seek or enjoy. The Cottage at Townend, however, was not formally relinquished till some time after this.

With *Tait's Magazine*, which had been started in Edinburgh as a kind of Whig or Liberal opponent of *Blackwood*, De Quincey had formed a connection which proved profitable to him in several ways. Though committed politically, the publisher was willing to hold literature, so far, an open field, and to allow considerable latitude in that department to the expression of personal opinion. It was in the pages of *Tait*, for the next fifteen years, that some of his best and most interesting, if less finished, writings found a place. It was at this time, too, that he wrote the greater portion of the story "Klosterheim," which was published by the Messrs. Blackwood as an independent volume in 1832, the only thing in the shape of a novel which De Quincey ever attempted, or at all events ever gave to the world avowedly as such.

The scene of "Klosterheim" is laid in Germany in the time of the Thirty Years' War, when the inrush of the Swedes had disturbed all the ordinary relations; when numbers of freebooters found ample verge for their

predatory propensities ; and minor princes were betrayed into sympathy with the foreigners. Some of these freebooters were actually encouraged by the Swedes for their own purposes, and on this point some details of the plot of "*Klosterheim*" depend.

If the story here and there shows some lack of variety, and of relief in dialogue, it is dramatically conceived, and conveys a vivid idea of the condition of Germany at the opening of the seventeenth century ; and it is a masterpiece of style. De Quincey himself, however, after having made his experiment, was so keenly alive to its defects, that he would not consent to its forming part of the collected works. But it is worthy of the attention of the student as revealing the varied capacities of De Quincey's mind, and the high position that he might have secured as a novelist, had not other interests taken possession of him at those earlier stages of life, when the constructive and inventive powers are most susceptible of education. Though De Quincey never set store by "*Klosterheim*," a student of his works cannot afford to ignore it ; and it has met with much favour, and has been highly spoken of by several critics of repute.

"*Klosterheim*" has for us a distinct biographical interest. It was written—certainly a great part of it was written—amidst grief and loneliness. Perhaps, in De Quincey's case, as in other cases on record, following the fate of imaginary characters was found to be the most efficient anodyne for painful preoccupation. Viewed in this aspect, the work will take on a new autobiographic value to any one who wishes to follow the history of De Quincey's mind, and to find points of sympathy with it sufficient to justify a really impartial judgment on such a work.

De Quincey's literary interests, we may say, now centred completely in Edinburgh. In 1832-34 *Blackwood* was brightened by the series on the Cæsars ; and articles on Hannah More and Animal Magnetism, a subject which was then causing some stir, followed them. In 1834 the autobiographic sketches began to appear in *Tait's Magazine*. His reputation was such

that editors were willing to pay him extra prices ; but his powers of production were not of the steady and equable kind which can be depended on for a regular supply of marketable material. Besides, he was always fastidious, and found it very difficult to please himself. At this time, as at his first adventure into the literary field in London, he frequently remodelled and rewrote an article several times over, before he could bring it up to what he regarded as a passable point. He was, in his own way, conscientious in the extreme. If he did not fall readily into what is called the "popular style," he respected his own ideal, and many a half-finished article saw its way to the brilliant ordeal of the fire in these days. The autobiographic articles in *Tait*, pervaded as they were by a strong vein of the personal element, balanced, so to speak, by a strong desire to give a wholly disinterested view of the most distinguished people he had met, were not in every instance admired. The friends of Wordsworth and the family of Coleridge were both offended, and inclined to make representations and retaliate ; but the odd thing was, that neither could disguise a certain pride in the fact that a man of such high authority should, with his acuteness and discrimination, unqualifiedly praise the genius of the men, whatever faults he may have detected and set forth as having existed in their characters. Sara Coleridge, for instance, wrote to a friend on the subject of De Quincey's treatment of her father, and after saying how offended the family were with certain little personal allusions, she naïvely goes on to confess :—

"He has characterised my father's genius and peculiar mode of discourse with great eloquence and discrimination. He speaks of him as possessing 'the most spacious intellect, the subtlest and the most comprehensive' (in his judgment) that ever existed amongst men. Whatever may be decided by the world in general upon this point, it is one which, from learning and ability, he is well qualified to discuss. I cannot believe that he had any enmity to my father ; indeed he often speaks of his kindness of heart."

And again, in the "Biographia Literaria" (ii. pp. 408, 409) we find this record:—

"Of all the censors of Mr. Coleridge, Mr. de Quincey is the one whose remarks are the most worthy of attention; those of the rest in general are but views taken from a distance, and filled up by conjecture, views taken through a medium so thick with *opinion*, even if not clouded with vanity and self-love, that it resembles a horn more than glass or the transpicious air. The Opium-Eater, as he has called himself, had sufficient inward sympathy with the subject of his criticism to be capable in some degree of beholding his mind, as it actually existed, in all the intermingling shades of individual reality; and in few minds have these shades been more subtly intermingled than in my father's."

Most readers at this date will, we think, be inclined to say that Miss Mitford speaks with singular impartiality and good judgment when she writes thus:—"The truth and life of these Lake sketches is something wonderful. Of course, the blind worshippers of Wordsworth quarrel with him, but there is quite enough left to praise and admire in the bard of 'The Excursion' after accepting Mr. de Quincey's portrait."

Tait's Magazine, with which, as has been said, his connection continued for upwards of a dozen years, was the main source of his income for that period; and any curious student will find in the volumes for these years various shorter articles which have not been deemed worthy of reprinting, but which are for the most part richly characteristic.*

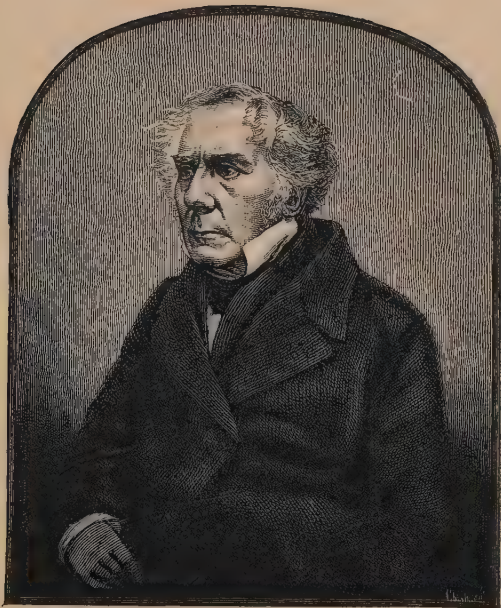
This period, which may be regarded as singularly successful, in a literary point of view, was marked by repeated domestic bereavements, which had their own influence on De Quincey's mind and character. Julius, his youngest son, an attractive child of four years of age, on whom he doted, suddenly died of fever in

* True when this paragraph was first written; but hardly the case now, owing to the thoroughness in this respect of the new edition of "The Collected Works," into which most of them have been drawn.

1833. Then his oldest son, William, a brilliant and beautiful youth, not eighteen, "whose scholarship and eagerness for learning," says Mrs. Baird Smith, "astonished even my father, who was his sole tutor," passed away in 1835 from a painful and obscure disease of the brain.

From 1830 till the year 1834 he had lived with his family, either in Great King Street, or in Forres Street, or at Duddingstone. The house in Great King Street was a large furnished house, and was taken under a calculation presuming on a steady amount of marketable production. As powerful inducements, too, there was the near neighbourhood of Sir William Hamilton and his brother Captain Hamilton ("Cyril Thornton")—both of whom found in De Quincey special attractions. In Sir William Hamilton's library De Quincey was soon at home—furnished, as it was, with the rarest and abstrusest books, many of which De Quincey carried off to his own house, to discuss with their owner special points when he returned them to him—no doubt often to Hamilton's great delight and mental stimulus. Captain Hamilton was, and remained to the end, one of the most devoted friends of the family.

De Quincey failed in realising what he had expected in the way of income; and most of his difficulties in Edinburgh, precipitating him into circumstances which ever afterwards it caused him exquisite pain to think of, resulted simply from his incapacity to face creditors, and to do what the most ordinary common-sense might have suggested to arrange his affairs on a satisfactory footing. Often when he was fleeing from creditors as much was really due to him as he was due to others. He chose to leave his affairs to arrange themselves. It is simply denied, however, that there was anything more blameworthy than this lack of practicality and business tact, which was, and had all along been, combined, as Mr. Hill Burton has said, with a generosity and a charity so open and unstinted as might, had it been dispensed with a view to advertisement, have made him widely known as a philanthropist.



W. Hamilton

SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON, BART.

NOW EXPRESSLY ENGRAVED FROM THE ORIGINAL DAGUERRETYPE IN THE
POSSESSION OF MR. JOHN HOGG, TAKEN ABOUT 1852.

[To face page 216.]



CHAPTER XXI.

IN HOLYROOD.

AS more and more De Quincey's affairs reached the crisis that demanded firm business-like treatment, the more helpless he became, the more futile his efforts. Instead of meeting his creditors and coming to a practical agreement with them, his method was to try and hide himself. This more from shyness and excessive sensitiveness than from any desire to inflict wrong on others. To such a strait had things come, that in 1835 he had to seek sanctuary within the precincts of Holyrood. This fact was sufficiently suggested in the earlier form of this memoir; it has been deemed better here to deal with it frankly.

Imprisonment for debt has now been done away with, in Scotland as well as elsewhere in these islands, but at the time of which we write imprisonment for debt was common. A cantankerous creditor might revenge himself upon a debtor by taking from him for years any chance of pursuing with success the course by which he might retrieve his position. At the same time, the law allowed some chances of escape from this dire form of punishment. Get within Sanctuary; and keep there. But the mere fact of escaping to Sanctuary was not enough. Twenty-four hours were allowed the debtor to register or book himself; if he failed to do so he might be apprehended

in Sanctuary and taken to prison. The fee for the protection secured by this process was £2, 2s., including booking. The Bailie, who was appointed by the hereditary Keeper of Holyrood, was himself a magistrate, and had to hold court, and hear and decide all manner of causes arising out of the fact of his jurisdiction; to hear objections of creditors, if they appeared, so that no injustice was done to them; to settle all differences between those who enjoyed the privileges; to take cognizance of money brought in by creditors; to prevent any fraudulent behaviour; to look smartly that the privilege of Sanctuary was not used as a means to "fly the realm" (in which case he was himself responsible for the debt); and to see that those who had privilege contracted no debts within Sanctuary, in which case he could imprison them in the Abbey prison. In the event of absence from Sanctuary beyond fourteen days a new booking had to be effected.

For an unfortunate debtor who could not arrange to satisfy his creditors, Sanctuary was not a bad alternative to jail. "The debtor enjoys many advantages," says Halkerston, "when compared with the *squalor carceris*, the filth and confinement of a jail, such as the benefit of comfortable lodgings, salubrious air, and of extensive romantic walks within the precincts, which occupy a range of between five and six miles in circumference, including Arthur's Seat and the surrounding hills and valleys, Salisbury Craigs, St. Anthony's Chapel, King's (now Queen's) Park, Palace, Palace-yard, &c., to the Strand at the foot of the Canongate. And during the period of his protection, he is at liberty to remove beyond the bounds during Sundays." *

De Quincey is not the first man of note who in misfortune or as a result of mismanagement has had to try this resource. Defoe, after one of his adventures failed, was in Sanctuary in Bristol; and being seen by the women

* "A Treatise on the History, Law, and Privilege of the Palace and Sanctuary of Holyrood House, with Appendix, List of Cases, and Index Materiarum. By Peter Halkerston, LL.D., S.S.C.," Halkerston was himself for some time Bailie of Holyrood,

walking out only on the Sabbath-day, was called by them the "Sunday gentleman." So De Quincey, like Defoe, became a "Sunday gentleman." Had he not done so, it is hardly possible that we should have had some of the best essays that appeared in *Tait*, for they were written there.

In Holyrood, as elsewhere, he found friends—congenial, attached, and intelligent friends. Notable amongst these were Major Miller of Dalswinton and his daughters, who, having once made the acquaintance of the De Quincey family, were ceaseless in their endeavours to lighten the burden that lay upon them and to relieve their solitude—some of the most pleasant times the family can recall having been spent in their society—the talk intellectual, elevated, ranging over many subjects. In fact, Major Miller, so long as he lived, was almost a nightly visitor. And another, too, in especial is recalled, the bearer of a name illustrious in the annals of England, who emerged from Holyrood to assume the ancestral honours.

And Holyrood had for De Quincey memories and associations of a more intimate and touching kind. Mrs. de Quincey's health failed rapidly after her son William's death. She died in August 1837, and was buried in the West Kirkyard, Edinburgh, beside her children.

In spite of much in her husband's habits fitted in many ways to ruffle the current of domestic happiness, her life had been beyond most bright and cheerful, full of the patient confidence and uncomplaining devotion that only true affection can sustain. The loss of one who had proved so faithful a helpmeet was a heavy blow to De Quincey, and, disinclined though he was to allow the facts of biography to steal into his sketches, he has enshrined that memory in words as touching and suggestive as anything in the language.

"Looking back to that time, when I was a mere child," Mrs. Baird Smith writes, "I yet seem to see that his mind was unhinged by these sorrows, and the overwhelming thought of being left with a family of such differing ages and needs, and with no female relative at hand to

help him, as even his eldest daughter was then so young that she must have seemed to him, as she did to others, herself most needing a mother's care. But her character soon so developed as to leave him no anxiety on this ground, for she became the able and upright mistress of the household almost immediately, and her and her next brother's wise resolution it was—the two being still little beyond childhood—which removed the family from the expensive and undesirable life of a town to the quiet and wholesome little home near Lasswade, she sacrificing much personal enjoyment and companionship at the time to secure what she felt to be for the honour of the family—the power to live within our small means.”

In the introduction to a series of “Letters from a Modern Author to his Daughters on the Useful Limits of Literature considered as a Study for Females”—a work which unfortunately exists only in an unavailable fragmentary condition—he thus refers pathetically to these trials:—

“You have been in some measure a witness to the fortitude with which I have borne these latter calamities. True it is that we, who see most of each other, nearest relations united in the same household, see but little of that inner world, that world of secret self-consciousness, in which each of us lives a second life apart and with himself alone, collateral to his other life, or life which he lives in common with others. That is a world in which every man, the very meanest, is a solitary presence, and cannot admit the fellowship even of that one amongst all his fellow-creatures whom he loves the most and perhaps regards as his other self. But allowing for this impossibility of following me into these secret haunts of feeling—privileged recesses for all human beings alike—you have in other respects seen the silence and tranquillity with which I have supported losses the heaviest by which I could have been assailed—wounds applied, as if with premeditating skill, exactly to those points in which chiefly I was vulnerable. I will trust myself to notice particularly only one case. Your eldest brother, my first-

born child, the crown and glory of my life, died* nearly upon his eighteenth birthday. Upon him I had exhausted all that care and hourly companionship could do for the culture of an intellect, in all stages of his life, somewhat premature. And the result was such, so far beyond what I had even hoped for, that I was advised (and at one time I entertained the advice) to publish a little memorial account of him and his accomplishments. In this I could at least have shown, in proof of his classical attainments, not merely an Etonian skill in the management of Greek metres, but, in one instance at least, in a commentary which he had composed at sixteen upon Suetonius, that he had dealt successfully with some difficulties that had baffled both Casaubon and Joseph Scaliger. Some of these, indeed, I shall yet take an opportunity of publishing; not so much by way of trophy to him, as for the real light they bring to the text of that author. But from the scheme of a memoir my heart retreated under the hopelessness that I could raise any echo to the feelings which moved there by the faint exhibition of a few glittering accomplishments—accomplishments possessed in common with many of every generation for the last two centuries, who, each in his turn, has been honoured by tributes which brightened their memories with some fugitive effect, have had their names murmured over with a sound continually decaying through a few brief months, and then have all alike sunk into everlasting silence and forgetfulness. Such records are tolerated out of pity for the anguish of wounds yet raw and bleeding; but rarely do they gather in their train any genuine accompaniments of sympathy: nor is praise, after all, and the language of honour, any balm to real sorrow: love only, the love which feels a loss, and not *for* a loss, is the one sole consolation which penetrates to the heart of those who weep in secret for the vanished faces of their household.

* Of a complaint affecting the brain, and so far anomalous that a long and elaborate account of it was thought requisite, and was drawn up and published by the learned and very able physician, Dr. Balfour, who chiefly watched its progress.

"Under this loss, which (as I have said) cut away from me the very glory of my life, you can bear me witness that I have not otherwise shown any alteration in habits of feeling than by study and literary labours far more intense. I believe that in the course of any one month since that unhappy day I have put forth more effort in the way of thought, of research, and of composition, than in any five months together selected from my previous life. Thus at least (if no other good end has been attained) I have been able to instruct my surviving children in the knowledge that grief may be supported, and how it may be supported. Energy of thought, and the determinate application of the mind to themes able to absorb its entire capacity of feeling—these, with a spirit of un-murmuring resignation, are equal to the task of suspending daily for hours, turning aside, and charming into slumber, the most heart-gnawing affliction."

A correspondent of the *Glasgow Herald*, who as a boy was in the shop of Mr. Tait, the publisher of *Tait's Magazine*, has given some pleasant and sympathetic reminiscences of De Quincey at this time, in which he says :—

"Probably the recollection of his wife was present to his mind at the date of my visit ; at any rate, he looked sad and preoccupied, but he received me with that never-failing and gentle politeness which formed so pleasant a feature of his kindly nature. I noticed that, of the two letters of which I was the bearer, he turned first to that containing the proof, glancing over it perhaps for a minute or so. Then, observing that I was standing cap in hand, he begged me to be seated whilst he wrote to Mr. Tait. He then broke the seal of the second letter. It contained a brief communication relative to the money enclosed, which, as it seemed to me, he examined somewhat curiously. Rising from his chair, he said, 'This is a somewhat embarrassing sum of money for me to have here. Might I request you—there is a place of entertainment, it is called a public-house, almost at the door, and if you will have the kindness to go there and ask the lady of the house to give you lesser money for this note, I shall be extremely obliged to you ; and if at the same time you

will be so good as to ask the servant of the establishment to send me a small supply of the excellent brandy which is kept there, you will still further oblige me.'

"Curiously enough, the letter which Mr. de Quincey gave me contained no acknowledgment for the money sent to him, but was entirely taken up with matters pertaining to an article, I think, on Greek literature. As a matter of business, a formal acknowledgment was asked for; to the letter demanding a receipt there came a verbal answer, brought by the landlady's daughter, to the effect that the young gentleman who had been so kind as to bring him the money would be able to assure Mr. Tait that it had been received. Mr. Tait was much amused at the odd way Mr. de Quincey had adopted of acknowledging receipt of the money, and remarked about it to Miss Miller, but all that she replied was, 'Oh, it's just like him.' . . .

"The publisher of *Tait* (as also the editress, Mrs. Johnston) had a very high opinion of De Quincey's ability as a contributor, and on the occasion of his visits treated him with considerable deference. The usual rate of payment made to his contributors by Mr. Tait was at the rate of fourteen guineas per sheet of sixteen pages, but the articles written by the Opium-Eater were paid for at a higher rate—twenty guineas a sheet, I think, was the sum. When a cheque on the British Linen Company's Bank was sent to him on one occasion a messenger brought it back to Mr. Tait to be cashed, with the intimation that at the moment so large an amount was not required. On such occasions as Mr. Tait could prevail on Mr. de Quincey to take what he called 'pot-luck' with him, I was always sent to his residence to warn the housekeeper, so that she might prepare some kind of soft food for him. She said to me on one of these visits that he was 'as like our Saviour as he could look,' which was certainly not a bad description of his refined face."

We are told that on Sunday nights exciting scenes often took place at the Abbey Strand or boundary. Debtors who had gone forth as "Sunday gentlemen," forgetful of the flight of time amid old friends and intimates, hospitably inclined, would overstay their time,

and then have to make a run for it, or "jump the Strand," as the saying was, on or after the stroke of twelve. A little band of Sheriff's officers might then be seen vigilantly bent on "business;" but one who knew a good deal of the work used to say that "it was not easy to lay salt on the tails of such downy birds, some of them being quite able to outwit the cleverest officers." Mr. de Quincey, says the correspondent of the *Herald*, "being in town one Sunday with some friends at a noted place of resort near to the famous Ambrose's Hotel, which Christopher North has made famous in the 'Noctes,' finding time pass pleasantly and feeling comfortable, remained there till the next Sunday, when he could go back to Sanctuary in safety; his landlady being meanwhile much concerned, thinking he had fallen into the hands of a creditor."

Halkerston, in his "History of Holyrood," tells in a footnote of a clergyman, protected in the Abbey, removing from it late on Saturday night, preaching to his congregation on Sunday, and then returning to the Abbey the same day, thereby travelling fully forty miles.

De Quincey, it is evident, was tempted oftener than once to stay away longer than the regulation allowance. In Dr. James Brown's discerning and sympathetic memoir of that richly original and stimulating genius, Dr. W. B. Robertson of Irvine, we have proof of this. Dr. Robertson, it seems, was a cousin of Mr. Thomas M'Indoe, S.S.C. (or Solicitor before the Supreme Courts), who was De Quincey's legal adviser. He had gone over to Mr. M'Indoe's dwelling at 113 Princes Street one evening in 1837 or 1838 to ask Mr. M'Indoe's advice on some point, and Mrs. M'Indoe, noticing some defect, as was likely enough, in the Opium-Eater's outgoing garments, kindly asked him to stay till next morning that she might have it repaired. He accepted the invitation, and remained the M'Indoes' guest for three years.*

* This was De Quincey's favourite and delicate way of putting it invariably: he was the guest of Miss Miller; the guest of Mrs. Wilson, in Lothian Street; but in all cases the lodgings where he made any lengthened stay were paid for.

Robertson was then a student at the Theological Hall, and visited the house, and by-and-by, getting to know who was the mysterious inmate occupying the bedroom by the side of the dining-room, he persuaded his cousin to give him an introduction. This was for Robertson an *entrée* into a new kingdom. He himself says, and Dr. Brown agrees with him, that from the new acquaintance he learned more than from his books. "It led him into a new world of thought and speculation," says Dr. Brown. "It quickened his imagination and left its mark on his style of speech and writing. He often said that if he had any power of expressing himself in good English, he owed it to Thomas de Quincey." Dr. Robertson himself never forgot the benefits he received, and gratefully recorded it:—

"De Quincey, whose literary style is in the English language—more perhaps in his later than in his earlier works—perfectly unrivalled. From him, through so early an acquaintance with the old man eloquent, I, still young, learned more than from all other earthly masters of mine. And as his writings and low-toned, weird, musical speech—to which I would alone with him, night after night, listen for hours together—were all upon the side of Christianity (unlike the sceptical and godless *literati* that babble around us nowadays), this had for me an indescribable charm, which, like the charm of a beautiful child of his (it is long ago, but 'a thing of beauty is a joy for ever'), has never passed away."

The young student, says Dr. Brown, sought to repay his debt to the illustrious writer by every ministry of kindness he had an opportunity of rendering. He gladly spent hours in his company, and lightened the gloom of his strange solitude, so that the dreamer learned to look for his coming.!

"To few besides was the door of his chamber opened. Mr. Robertson's youngest sister remembers the awe with which, when she was a very little child and on a visit to her kinsman, she regarded that door and the mysterious man behind it, who put forth his hand to receive his meals. The little girl asked the servant why she handed

in the gentleman's meals and did not go into the room. The reply was, 'The last body who went in there was put up the lum [chimney], and never came out!' Once, when she was playing in the lobby with his daughter Emily, the door of the dreaded room was opened softly, and the gentle voice was heard. Emily said, 'It is you he wishes,' whereupon she ran screaming into the kitchen, and hid behind the servant. But Emily followed and dragging her from her hiding-place to the door, pushed her in. She has in her mind a vivid picture of the aspect of the room, with its awful 'lum,' up which she expected to be thrust. There was not a spot which was not littered with papers. De Quincey spoke kindly, and said, 'I do not wish to frighten you, my dear, but only to ask whether your name is Robertson, Robison, or Robinson,' putting the emphasis on the distinctive syllables."

Mr. Robertson had already been engaged as tutor to the children of Captain Aytoun at Glendevon, in the Ochils, and in answer to a pressing invitation to return, he did so for another period. We find him writing thus to Mr. M'Indoe:—

"GLENDEVON, *Midnight,*

Hallowe'en, 1839.

"Writing to a friend to-night, I have made an engagement which presupposes my being in town about Christmas (not sooner), being conscious of no inducement to this above that of spending an hour with you, and, by your permission, De Quincey (of course to write that name with a Mr. would argue as much ignorance of literature as to write mine without it). By the way, if Mrs. M. will insist that the Opium-Eater possesses all the attractions that ever draws me to 113 Princes Street, I should like to be told how I first came to meet him there at all. She seems to suspect I look on her as something like that cipher in arithmetic which is nothing in itself, but acquires a value from the figure beside it. Very well; but then, you know, it multiplies that other by ten again, and indeed so did she by the indulgence she gave me to see him so late and so often, and, as you

know, every opportunity of this kind could only enhance his—— But I am becoming mathematical instead of sentimental, and should only say that I am very thankful to them both.”

It was under De Quincey’s advice that Dr. Robertson spent a year of study in Germany, which he turned to the very best account.

After the death of Major Miller his daughters left Holyrood to settle elsewhere in Edinburgh, and others of the original society in which De Quincey had found so much pleasant relief and escape from his preoccupations gradually left it also; this is the explanation of some phrases we shall immediately meet with from his pen. Busy he was, but without the congenial cheer of that companionship on which he so much depended. Of these days few records remain, but here is a letter addressed to Miss Jessie Miller, in whose society, and that of her father and sister, he had spent so many pleasant hours:—

“*Saturday Morning, May 26, 1837.*

“MY DEAR MISS JESSIE,—In some beautiful verses where the writer has occasion to speak of festivals, household or national, that revolve annually, I recollect at this moment from his description one line to the effect—

‘*Remembered half the year and hoped the rest.*’

Thus Christmas, I suppose, is a subject for *memory* until midsummer, after which it becomes a subject for *hope*, because the mind ceases to haunt the image of the past festival in a dawning anticipation of another that is daily drawing nearer. ‘Well,’ I hear you say, ‘a very pretty sentimental opening for a note addressed to a lady! but what is the *moral* of it?’

“The moral, my dear Miss Jessie, is this—that I, soul-sick of endless writing, look back continually with sorrowful remembrances to the happy interval which I spent under your roof; and next after that, I regret those insulated evenings (scattered here and there) which, with a troubled pleasure—pleasure anxious and boding—

I have passed beneath the soft splendours of your lamps since I was obliged to quit the quiet haven of your house. Sorrowful, I say, these remembrances are, and must be by contrast with my present gloomy solitude; and if they ever cease to be sorrowful, it is when some new evening to be spent underneath the same lamps comes within view. *That* which is *remembered* only suddenly puts on the blossoming of *hope*, and wears the vernal dress of a happiness to come, instead of the sad autumnal dress of happiness that has vanished.

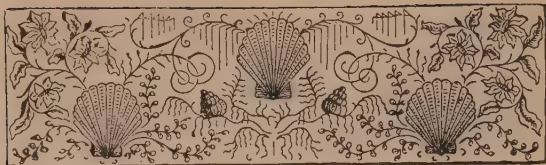
"Is this sentimental? Be it so; but then also it is intensely true; and sentimentality cannot avail to vitiate truth; on the contrary, truth avails to dignify and exalt the sentimental. But why breathe forth these feelings, sentimental or not, precisely on this vulgar Saturday? (for Saturday is a day radically vulgar to my mind, incurably sacred to the genius of marketing, and hostile to the sentimental in any shape). 'Why?' you persist in asking. Simply because, if this is Saturday, it happens that to-morrow is Sunday; and on a Sunday night only, *if even then*, I can now approach you without danger. And what I fear is—that you, so strict in your religious observances, will be dedicating to some evening lecture, or charity sermon, or missionary meeting, that time which *might* be spent in Duncan Street, and perhaps—pardon me for saying so—more profitably. 'How so?' Why, because, by attending the missionary meeting, for example, you will, after all, scarcely contribute the 7th, or even the 70th, share to the conversion of some New Zealander or feather-cinctured prince of Owhyee. Whereas now, on the other hand, by vouchsafing your presence to Duncan Street, you will give—and not to an unbaptized infidel, who can never thank you, but to a son of the Cross, who will thank you from the very centre of his heart—a happiness like that I spoke of as belonging to recurring festivals, furnishing a subject for *memory* through one half of the succeeding interval, and for *hope* through the other.

"Florence was with me yesterday morning, and again throughout the evening; and, by the way, dressed in

your present. Perhaps she may see you before I do, and may tell you that I have been for some time occupied at intervals in writing some memorial 'Lines for a Cenotaph to Major Miller, of the Horse Guards Blue,' and towards which I want some information from you. The lines are about thirty-six in number; too many, you will say, for an epitaph. Yes, if they were meant for the *real* place of burial; but these, for the very purpose of evading that restriction, are designed for a cenotaph, to which situation a more unlimited privilege in that respect is usually conceded."

The connexion with Holyrood continued off and on, with such breaks or interludes as we have referred to, till the early part of 1840.

Mr. Charles Knight in former years had felt no lapse of respect and love for De Quincey because he had found him, through his own sensitiveness and incapacity, in some miserable transpontine London lodging-house, where for safety he hid his bank-draft between the leaves of his Bible. Mr. Hill Burton, knowing all about the strange and what might seem to some compromising retreats of his Edinburgh life, put fully on record his love and admiration. And even when in Holyrood no one who knew well the circumstances and the man felt that he had lowered himself in their eyes or forfeited their good feeling towards him. Wherever he went worthy people became his friends, even where they could have no fellowship with him in his aspirations and pursuits; and in Dr. Robertson we have a typical instance; for he was at once shrewd and discerning, and able in so far to sympathise and to understand, and never to the end did he fail in his tribute of love and admiration and gratitude, and remained to the end one of the most attached and valued friends of the family.



CHAPTER XXII.

MR. HILL BURTON'S IMPRESSIONS, AND THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA.

IT is probably to a period not much later than we have now reached that Mr. Hill Burton chiefly refers in his unique and kindly sketch of De Quincey, under the thin disguise of "Papaverius" in "The Bookhunter," in which the genius is aptly and humorously characterised, as well as some of his defects gently noted:—

"Those who knew him a little might call him a loose man in money-matters; those who knew him closer laughed at the idea of coupling any notion of pecuniary or other like responsibility with his nature. You might as well attack the character of the nightingale, which may have nipped up your five-pound note and torn it to shreds to serve as nest-building material. Only immediate craving necessities could ever extract from him an acknowledgment of the common vulgar agencies by which men subsist in civilised society; and only while the necessity lasted did the acknowledgment exist. Take just one example, which will render this clearer than any generalities. He arrives late at a friend's door, and on gaining admission—a process in which he often endured impediments—he represents, with his usual silver voice and measured rhetoric, the absolute necessity of his being

then and there invested with a sum of money in the current coin of the realm—the amount limited, from the nature of his necessities, which he very freely states, to 7s. 6d. Discovering, or fancying he discovers, signs that his eloquence is likely to be unproductive, he is fortunately reminded that, should there be any difficulty in connection with security for the repayment of the loan, he is at that moment in possession of a document, which he is prepared to deposit with the lender—a document calculated, he cannot doubt, to remove any feeling of anxiety which the most prudent person could experience in the circumstances. After a rummage in his pockets, which develops miscellaneous and varied, but as yet by no means valuable, possessions, he at last comes to the object of his search, a crumpled bit of paper, and spreads it out—a fifty-pound bank-note! The friend, who knew him well, was of opinion that, had he, on delivering over the 7s. 6d., received the bank-note, he never would have heard anything more of the transaction from the other party. It was also his opinion that, before coming to a personal friend, the owner of the note had made several efforts to raise money on it among persons who might take a purely business view of such transactions; but the lateness of the hour, and something in the appearance of the thing altogether, had induced these mercenaries to forget their cunning, and decline the transaction.

“He stretched till it broke the proverb that ‘to give quickly is as good as to give twice.’ His giving was quick enough on the rare occasions when he had wherewithal to give, but then the act was final, and could not be repeated. If he suffered in his own person from this peculiarity, he suffered still more in his sympathies, for he was full of them to all breathing creatures, and, like poor Goldie, it was agony to him to hear the beggar’s cry of distress, and to hear it without the means of assuaging it, though in a departed fifty pounds there were doubtless the elements for appeasing many a street wail. All sums of money were measured to him through the common standard of immediate use. . . .

"Peace be with his gentle and kindly spirit, now for some time separated from its grotesque and humble tenement of clay! It is both right and pleasant to say that the characteristics here spoken of were not those of his latter days. In these he was tended by affectionate hands; and I have always thought it a wonderful instance of the power of domestic and filial management, that, through the ministrations of a devoted offspring, this strange being was so cared for, that those who came in contact with him then, and then only, might have admired him as the patriarchal head of an agreeable and elegant household."

As an illustration of De Quincey's utter incapacity in business, his daughter recalls the almost incredible fact, that, as a mere child, she was led to utter her feeble protest against her father paying to one of his landladies (who turned out anything but what he had taken her for) a sum of forty-nine pounds ten shillings, without so much as receiving or asking for an acknowledgment or receipt of any kind; and in answer to her feeble protest, he replied, "My dear, it is quite right; Miss So-and-So is a lady." It is easy to see what confusion might result from this, and openings for bogus claims and accounts many years afterwards.

The years 1837-40 were particularly busy and productive years. In addition to the articles on the "Essenes," which showed immense research, and the power of penetrating beyond masses of detail to the essential purport of remote social movements, and the articles on "Style," which appeared in *Blackwood* in 1840-41, and those on "Homer and the Homeridæ" which speedily followed them, De Quincey continued his "Reminiscences" in *Tait*, and also wrote several of the biographies for the "Encyclopædia Britannica." The most notable of these was that on Shakespeare. Here, in the absence of clear historic fact, he showed in a higher degree than has probably been attained by any other Englishman—certainly than by any of his own contemporaries—the power of literary restoration, a power which may be said to correspond to the gift of the comparative anatomist.

De Quincey, in spite of the cloud that rests on large spaces in the life of the "Gentle Will," wrote a very clear and complete biography, which has hardly been displaced by later efforts, though research has since then been busy, and has achieved much. Of this essay, which appeared in 1840, we find a writer in *Fraser's Magazine* for July 1841 thus taking occasion to recount his meetings with De Quincey, though professedly concerned only with the "New Life of Shakespeare:"—

"We have ourselves read all the lives of Shakespeare that we could buy, borrow, or steal; and in the most operose, as in the most frivolous, we have always met with something to interest or amuse. The last that has fallen into our hands is one by that curiously meditative and subtle spirit, Thomas de Quincey, who has thrust an admirable and ingenious memoir into a grave and ponderous work, the 'Encyclopædia Britannica,' where it shines among treatises on the senses, serpents, and ship-building. The Opium-Eater must be a new man. The dreamy languor of his former state seems to have passed away; and he is as alert and vigorous, and as zealous in his researches and investigations, as if he had all his life, like Milton, risen at the crowing of the cock, and been unconscious of the *black bottle* that graced his table through the long hours of midnight among the wilds of Westmoreland. We remember once passing a night with this most eloquent dissertator and conversationalist. The winds, keen and cutting as a scythe, swept the North Bridge of Edinburgh; but snugly seated in the Rainbow, we bade defiance to its blasts. Hour after hour glided on the stream of talk, welling out from the capacious, overflowing cells of Thought and Memory, that a single word, a hint, or token could stir and agitate. De Quincey seemed to live in the past, and the past has few such admirers or painters. When fully kindled up and warmed on his subject, his whole talk is poetry; and his slight, attenuated frame, pale countenance, and massive forehead, with the singular sweetness and melody of his voice and language, impress one as if a voice from the dead—from some 'old man eloquent'—had risen to tell

us of the hidden world of thought, and imagination, and knowledge.

‘No plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistening foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies.

“This is to exhibit the Opium-Eater in his best vein, and the picture is not overcharged. From such a source we expected an interesting sketch of Shakespeare’s life—some ingenious speculation and philosophising, a little wayward criticism or captious observation, as the wind might sit—and we have not been disappointed. About twenty close-printed, double-columned quarto pages has Mr. de Quincey presented to his readers on the subject of Shakespeare, running up his story even from his boyish days, and descanting on every salient point and prominent circumstance in that brief but glorious life. The narrative, of course, is merely a few facts—a slender thread on which to hang a string of pearls.”

By this time, too, De Quincey was at work on his “Logic of Political Economy,” which shows an aspect in which, *prima facie*, one would scarcely have expected him to figure as an expert.





CHAPTER XXIII.

LASSWADE.

IT was in 1840 that the family were transferred to Mavis Bush, a neat little cottage in the neighbourhood of Lasswade, which was leased for a period of years. It was pleasantly situated near Polton, not far from the river Esk, and being within a few miles of Edinburgh, presented the attraction of a retreat without the sense of banishment from such intellectual society as he cared for.

It needs, however, to be frankly admitted that the sense of depression which, in spite of this pleasant change of residence, had at intervals continued to oppress him for many years after the death of his wife had led to deeper relapses into opium than he had known between 1827 and 1837. Not seldom his misery was very great, in the mingled impotence to produce marketable work, and the sense of burdens with which he felt himself unable to cope. Places soon came to exercise an undescribable influence over him, as suggesting painful associations. This must be taken in some measure to account for his frequent changes of lodgings, and his occasional escapes, sometimes for weeks, to the houses of friends—friends who could for the most part allow for his eccentric ways in admiration of his genius, his eloquence, and the finer points in his personal character. Amongst these were Professor Wilson, Mr. Hill Burton, Professor Lushing-

ton, and Professor J. P. Nichol, the well-known astronomer, with whom—as any one will believe who remembers the article on Lord Rosse's telescopes—De Quincey was able to discuss the most abstruse ideas arising out of the more recent facts of astronomical research. Many a conversation took place at the tables of these three gentlemen (in which De Quincey was a leading voice), which as well deserved preservation as most table-talk that has been more prized, and privileged with preservation in print: but De Quincey had no Boswell.

It was mainly on account of his interest in astronomical researches that, in 1841-43, he made a stay in Glasgow, in order that he might profit by converse with his friend, Professor J. P. Nichol, at the Observatory, whose acquaintance he had made at the house of his friend Mrs. Crowe, of whom we shall speak farther on. He stayed for a short time with Professor Nichol in the old College, and then for a few weeks with Professor Lushington, immediately after that taking lodgings, first in the High Street, opposite the College, and afterwards at 79 Renfield Street, which lodgings (though during the years that intervened between his visits to Glasgow and when he resided with his daughters at Lasswade he never used them) were faithfully paid for till the year 1847, as here also were the inevitable gatherings of books and papers, to which, as though they could not be moved, he must have recourse when special circumstances arose to make reference necessary to anything in the piles there gathered.

Professor John Nichol has favoured us with the following notes:—

“Mr. de Quincey stayed about three months in our house in the old College in 1840 or 1841—I cannot be clear in dates to the year. I have a vivid impression of some of his habits, also of his intense love of music at that date. He made himself most interesting to me as a schoolboy in walking to the Observatory, where he made himself seem a master among sages: the courteous charm of his manner adding, in my ideas, to the eloquence of his talk.

He was in Glasgow at frequent intervals during the next ten years, and always called at the Observatory, but I do not remember his residing there. It must have been in 1847 or 1848. I think that he was for some time in lodgings, and engaged in writing. Troup may have been there then—and De Quincey, for aught I know, may have written something for him, as he did write for all sorts of things.”

That this stay with Professor Nichol was in 1841 is confirmed by the notes and recollections of Professor Lushington, whose acquaintance De Quincey then made—an acquaintance which grew into close friendship. Professor Lushington wrote on this point to Mrs. Baird Smith:—

“The first time I saw your father must have been on March 4, 1841. I met him at the Glasgow Observatory, where he was staying with my late colleague, Dr. Nichol, and dined with them that day. He had then, I think, not been long in Glasgow. Dr. Nichol was expecting some other friends before long. I was living by myself in the College, and it was arranged that he should come and stay with me, which he did on the 18th, and a short time afterwards went into lodgings. He was probably in Glasgow for most of the next session (October 1841–May 1842), during which two of my sisters lived with me in the College, and he certainly dined with us on one occasion when they were there.”

His power of managing amidst such heaps of books and papers was so dependent on arrangements marked by local position alone, that we can a little understand this peculiarity of his with respect to these gatherings, and his terror lest anything should be disturbed—a terror that led him to have at least four separate sets of lodgings, all being paid for at one time. It will thus readily be understood that necessities would arise for his sometimes going to Glasgow, as we have found that he did—being there for the most part from March 1841 to June 1843, and again in 1847 from January to the end of October. In May 1843 Charles Knight was in Glasgow investigating the question of Shakespeare’s personal acquaintance

with Scotland ; and he found out De Quincey in Glasgow. "He looked better than he had done twelve years before," writes Mr. Knight. . . . "Nothing could exceed the affection with which he received me. It was the last time I saw him." In 1845 we find record of one hurried visit in the end of October of that year, when he reached Glasgow the one day and left it the next. He certainly did not, after 1841, reside for any lengthened period with Professor Nichol. From other evidence, it is apparent that in 1845 he was much occupied in preparing his son Francis, who had up till this time been a clerk in a mercantile house, to pass a Latin examination preliminary to entrance on medical studies ; and he was with this object in Edinburgh, near the College. In 1843, and again in 1847-48, he was writing for a Glasgow newspaper which is not now in existence.

The following note to his son Francis, then still in Manchester, may be read with interest, both on account of the subject and the manner of treating it :—

"Monday, August, 8, 1842.

"MY DEAR FRANCIS,—I received your letter yesterday, six days after its date. This—the delay, I mean—arose, of course, from its circuitous route through Lasswade. That letter I will answer fully in a few days. Meantime, in this I reply to a former letter, in which you mentioned that you had read with pleasure the too famous 'Letters of Junius.' It was right, perhaps, that you should feel *some* pleasure in an author shrewd, caustic, sometimes even brilliant, and always happy in retort or stinging sarcasm. And for a young person, without much experience or power of comparing his sense of pleasure with any settled standard (which is slow to form itself in the mind), very often it is difficult in a high degree to ascertain how much he really *has* been pleased. Assured from without that he ought to have been pleased, too often he fancies that he was, and abides by that belief as a fixed persuasion ; though, left to himself, and unbiassed by any strong preconception of merit in the author, very possibly he might have found nothing but what was wearisome.

“Without discussing too anxiously the real merits of Junius as a master of composition, let me tell you one secret about him which accounts for his high reputation through so many years after his personalities must have become obsolete; for consider:—One generation succeeding to his own even *within* the eighteenth century, much more a second generation in this nineteenth century, what could *they* know or care about Sir W. Draper, the Dukes of Bedford and of Grafton, or Lord Mansfield as the Chief-Justice of England? This, you will say, tells in favour of Junius; for if he continued to please and to dazzle after he could no longer be supposed much indebted to his slanderous insinuations and his felicitous personalities, if he soared buoyantly through two generations of men when those Icarian wings had melted away,—surely this argues some deep intrinsic merit, potent enough to survive all casual and momentary attractions from illegitimate sources. True, it argues such a merit no doubt; but too powerfully. You have heard of arguments ‘proving too much;’ this is one of such arguments; and it well illustrates what is meant by *proving too much*. It is when the inference, to which the argument tends, would turn out too weighty for the case itself to support. ‘Is this your trunk, sir? this very splendid-looking trunk?’ ‘Oh yes, porter, it is mine; I brought it yesterday in this cab.’ ‘I am afraid not, sir; for when I try to lift it, I begin to perceive that it would crush your cab.’ In the case of Junius, were it at all true that some solid merit of a permanent kind had availed to compensate the gradual decay of his transient sarcasms, and to operate as a substitute, that merit must be excessive; and, therefore, the more easy it would be to assign it, to name it, or to describe it. For it must be a merit not only qualified to supply the gradual dropping away of personalities once racy and stimulant to the palate of every man familiar with public life (every man, for instance, at the first publication of the Letters, knew by sight and had an interest in Lord Granby, in Lord Mansfield, &c.); but it must be a merit vivid enough to counteract the dulness of obsolete—nay, forgotten—poli-

tics. No dulness in this world is equal to that of faded scandal, of stale law, of superannuated politics. Think of the fury with which you receive last *year's* paper from the waiter, dated August 8,—that unhappy man having lit the fire with the corresponding date of An. Dom. 1842, through hurry or philosophic absence of mind, tendering respectfully to you the very freshest and newest paper he has left himself—viz., for August 8, 1841. Assassination becomes almost a duty in such a case. But how if the villain should absolutely tender a journal of thirty-five, or even twice thirty-five, years back; perfectly right as to the *day* and the *month*, only so horribly wrong as to the *year* as to have been obviously stolen out of the pocket of your great-grandfather's riding-coat, confided to an ancestor of this waiter for the purpose of being dried at the kitchen-fire? You will admit that such a newspaper would need to show some most extraordinary splendour of one kind or other in order to balance the staleness of its news. The 'Letters of Junius' form precisely such a newspaper, with only sarcastic epigram and innuendo so nicely pointed that we ourselves are constantly reminded of instances to-day to which they might be applied, and yet the one defect about Junius is that he never in one solitary instance rises to a general principle.*

The year 1844 was notable for several reasons, and we must pause for a moment to dwell upon it. Amid the pressure of accumulated cares, he had so relapsed that he had once more reached something like five thousand

* This is but a vivid familiar illustration of what he says in his essay on "Rhetoric:"—"It is an absolute fact that Junius has not one principle, aphorism, or remark of a general nature in his whole armoury; not in a solitary instance did his barren understanding ascend to an abstraction or general idea, but lingered for ever in the dust and rubbish of individuality, amongst the tangible realities of things and persons. Hence the peculiar absurdity of that hypothesis which discovered Junius in the person of Burke. The opposition was here too pointedly ludicrous between Burke, who exalted the merest personal themes into the dignity of philosophic speculations, and Junius, in whose hands the very loftiest dwindled into questions of person and party."

drops of laudanum per day. This, as we shall see, is his fourth fall, which he himself honestly acknowledges in a passage written towards the close of his life. He now began to experience certain phases of nervous suffering in a more intense form than ever. He thought he now traced them directly to the opium, which he had always hitherto held to have modified or lessened certain acute and recurrent symptoms. His jottings and memoranda during this period show that he possessed more strength of will and self-control than he is usually credited with, else assuredly he must now have succumbed. Having convinced himself of the curse that excessive opium indulgence had been to him, he once more set himself resolutely to subdue it. His constant, careful jottings of graduated reductions day by day—his patient records of the effect of ordinary articles of diet, coffee, cocoa, &c.—his measured round of exercise, amounting to fifteen or twenty miles per day, often taken in the little treadmill walk of the garden attached to the Lasswade cottage, forty rounds counting for a mile—all are touching in the agony that may be read between the lines. He himself, in a letter to one of his dearest friends, has thus shadowed forth the experiences of that time:—

“With respect to my book [*The Logic of Political Economy*, which appeared in 1844], which perhaps by this time you and Professor Nichol will have received through the publishers, I have a word to say. Upon some of the distinctions there contended for it would be false humility if I should doubt they are sound. The substance, I am too well assured, is liable to no dispute. But as to the method of presenting the distinctions, as to the composition of the book, and the whole evolution of a course of thinking, there it is that I too deeply recognise the mind affected by my morbid condition. Through that ruin, and by help of that ruin, I looked into and read the latter states of Coleridge. His chaos I comprehended by the darkness of my own, and both were the work of laudanum. It is as if ivory carvings and elaborate fretwork and fair enamelling should be found with worms and ashes amongst coffins

and the wrecks of some forgotten life or some abolished nature. In parts and fractions eternal creations are carried on, but the nexus is wanting, and life and the central principle which should bind together all the parts at the centre, with all its radiations to the circumference, are wanting. Infinite incoherence, ropes of sand, gloomy incapacity of vital pervasion by some one plastic principle, that is the hideous incubus upon my mind always. For there is no disorganised wreck so absolute, so perfect, as that which is wrought by misery.

“Misery is a strong word; and I would not have molested your happiness by any such gloomy reference, were it not that I did really, and in solemn earnest, regard my condition in that same hopeless light as I did until lately. I had one sole glimmer of hope, and it was this—that laudanum might be the secret key to all this wretchedness, not utterable to any human ear, which for ever I endured. Upon this subject the following is my brief record. On leaving Glasgow in the first week of June 1843, I was as for two years you had known me. Why I know not, but for some cause during the summer months the weight of insufferable misery and mere abhorrence of life increased; but also it fluctuated. A conviction fell upon me that immense exercise might restore me. But you will imagine my horror when, with that conviction, I found, precisely in my earliest efforts, my feet gave way, and the misery in all its strength came back. Every prospect I had of being laid up as a cripple for life. Much and deeply I pondered on this, and I gathered myself up as if for a final effort. For if that fate were established, farewell I felt for me to all hope of restoration. Eternally the words sounded in my ears: ‘Suffered and was buried.’ Unless that one effort which I planned and determined, as often you see a prostrate horse ‘biding his time’ and reserving his strength for one mighty struggle, too surely I believe that for me no ray of light would ever shine again. The danger was, that at first going off on exercise the inflammation should come on; that, if then I persisted, the inflammation would settle into the bones, and the case become desperate. It

matters not to trouble you with the details—the result was this:—I took every precaution known to the surgical skill of the neighbourhood. Within a measured space of forty-four yards in circuit, so that forty rounds were exactly required for one mile, I had within ninety days walked a thousand miles. And so far I triumphed. But because still I was irregular as to laudanum, this also I reformed. For six months no results; one dreary uniformity of report—absolute desolation; misery so perfect that too surely I perceived, and no longer disguised from myself, the impossibility of continuing to live under so profound a blight. I now kept my journal as one who in a desert island is come to his last day's provisions. On Friday the 23rd of February, I might say for the first time, in scriptural words, 'And the man was sitting clothed and in his right mind.' That is not too strong an expression. I had known all along, and too ominously interpreted the experience from the fact, that I was not in my perfect mind. Lunacy causes misery; the border is sometimes crossed, and too often that is the order of succession. But also misery, and above all physical misery, working by means of intellectual remembrances and persecution of thoughts, no doubt sometimes inversely causes lunacy. To that issue I felt that all things tended. You may guess, therefore, the awe that fell upon me, when, not by random accident, capable of no theory on review, but in consequence of one firm system pursued through eight months as to one element, and nearly three as to another, I recovered in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, such a rectification of the compass as I had not known for years. It is true that this frame departed from me within forty-eight hours; but that no way alarmed me—I drew hope from the omen. It is as if a man had been in a whirlpool, carried violently by a headlong current, and before he could speak or think, he was riding as if at anchor, once more dull and untroubled, as in days of infancy. The current caught me again; and the old sufferings in degree came back, as I have said. There is something shocking and generally childish, by too obvious associations, in

any suggestions of suicide; but too certainly I felt that to this my condition tended; for again enormous irritability was rapidly travelling over the disk of my life, and this, and the consciousness of increasing weakness, added to my desolation of heart. I felt that no man could continue to struggle. Coleridge had often spoken to me of the dying away from him of all hope; not meaning, as I rightly understood him, the hope that forms itself as a distant look out into the future, but of the gladsome vital feelings that are born of the blood, and make the goings-on of life pleasurable.

"Then I partly understood him, now perfectly; and laying all things together, I returned obstinately to the belief that laudanum was at the root of all this unimaginable hell. Why then not, if only by way of experiment, leave it off? Alas! that had become impossible. Then I descended to a hundred drops. Effects so dreadful and utterly un conjectured by medical men succeeded that I was glad to get back under shelter. Not the less I persisted; silently, surely, descended the ladder, and, as I have said, suddenly found my mind as if whirled round on its true centre. A line of Wordsworth's about Germany I remembered:—

‘All power was given her in the dreadful trance.’

Such was my sense: illimitable seemed the powers restored to me; and now, having tried the key, and found it the true key, even though a blast of wind has blown the door to again, no jot of spirits was gone away from me: I shall arise as one risen from the dead.

"This long story I have told you, because nothing short of this could explain my conduct, past, present, and future. And thus far there is an interest for all the world—that I am certain of this, viz., that misery is the talisman by which man communicates with the world outside of our fleshly world."

In detached parts of his journals we find record of his experiences during this terrible struggle of 1844:—

"This night, Wednesday, December 25, about 7 P.M., has first solemnly revealed itself to me that I am and

have long been under a curse [q., the opium curse?], all the greater for being physically and by effort endurable, and for hiding itself, *i.e.*, playing in and out from all offices of life at every turn of every moment. Oh, dreadful! by degrees infinitely worse than leprosy—than—— But oh, what signifies the rhetoric of a case so sad! Conquer it I must by exercise unheard of, or it will conquer me.”

And later:—

“Did you ever read of leprosy as it existed in Judea, or—and that was worse—as it existed in Europe during the dark ages? Did you ever read of that tremendous visitation in the early days of Judaism, when, if the poor patient would have hushed up his misery in silence, the walls of his house whispered of his whereabouts? Horrible! that a man’s own chamber—the place of his refuge and retreat—should betray him! . . . Not fear or terror, but inexpressible misery, is the last portion of the opium-eater. At certain stages it is not so. We know of a man called X—— who has often jumped out of bed—bounced like a column of quicksilver—at midnight, fallen on his knees and cried out, while the perspiration ran down his wasted face, and his voice waked all the house, ‘O Jesus Christ, be merciful to me a sinner!’—so unimaginable had been the horror which sleep opened to his eyes. Such is for some time its effect. But, generally in its later stages, it is not horror, it is not fear: all these are swallowed up in misery.”

Mrs. Baird Smith says of this period:—

“Though I knew that about 1844 he succeeded in attaining a final comparative escape from opium, I was not aware till I had carefully perused these scattered fragments that the date had been so distinctly marked as it is. In June of that year he brought it down to six grains, and with the most signal benefit. I would not say by any means that he never exceeded this afterwards, but I am very sure he never much exceeded it after he had convinced himself that anything in excess of it caused much of his nervous suffering. I remember that he used to set down these memoranda; but, as I have said, I hardly hoped to find the dates so fully marked.”

The following extract from a letter to Miss Mitford in 1842 reveals some of the pleasant amenities of his Lasswade life :—

“More pleasant it must be if I try to give you some clue to the motive, the how and the why, of my residence in this place. My companions, as you know, are my three daughters, who, if it should be found that they had no other endowment from the bounty of nature, have this one, better perhaps than all that I could ask for them from the most potent of fairies, viz., that they live in the most absolute harmony I have ever witnessed. Such a sound as that of dissension in any shade or degree I have not once heard issuing from their lips. And it gladdens me beyond measure that all day long I hear from their little drawing-room intermitting sounds of gaiety and laughter, the most natural and spontaneous. Three sisters more entirely loving to each other, and more unaffectedly drawing their daily pleasures from sources that will always continue to lie within their power—viz., books and music—I have not either known or heard of. Our dwelling is a little cottage, containing eight rooms only, one of which (the largest), or what in London is called the *first* floor, is used as a drawing-room, and one about half the size, on the ground floor, a dining-room, but for a party of ten people at the utmost. Our garden-gate is exactly seven measured miles from the Scott Monument in Princes Street, Edinburgh. Lasswade, to which nominally we allocate ourselves, is in fact one mile and a half distant; but, as it is the nearest town possessing a market and a regular post-office (*Dalkeith*, which is very much larger, being distant three and a half miles or more), and as our means of communicating with Lasswade, though imperfect enough, are better than with any other place, it follows that Lasswade is the best address. . . . We keep only two servants (female servants), a housemaid and a cook, and with so narrow a command of labour, we are unable to send for our letters; the journey to and fro making a clear total of three miles' walking.”

The following note was addressed to a friend, and furnishes an additional incidental record of his experiences in reference to opium at that critical time :—

“LASSWADE, Wednesday, November 13, 1844.

“MY DEAR SIR,—I have but a moment to say how happy and flattered we shall feel by your taking the trouble of coming over from Edinburgh on Friday, and that without any shadow of inconvenience we can offer you a bed. As to writing, it is I who am the culprit, and *that* I should not have been but for the tremendous arrears of wrath still volleying and whirling round upon me from retreating opium. Its flight is Parthian, ‘flying, it pursues.’ I am much improved as to health; but, from dire reactions of frantic nervousness, my sufferings (though intermitting) have been great.

“I rejoice to find (indirectly, I mean, by your leaving home for a day or two) that Mrs. — is well, and your young hope is prospering. Just as I write this, it strikes me that, except by seven weeks *minus* one day, he has accomplished one revolution, not as W. W.’s first daughter in that divine commemorating poem of ‘The *second* glory of the heavens,’ but of the primary and central.

“The Lasswade coach brings you in so as to reach *us* (I understand) by half-past five. Of course we shall have the pleasure of seeing you to dinner.—Ever faithfully yours,
THOMAS DE QUINCEY.”

The following note, addressed to Mr. Young, banker, Lasswade, may be read with some interest, as bearing on a well-known article in *Tait* in 1845 :—

“Friday Night, December 13th, 1844.

“MY DEAR SIR,—On Wednesday night, in rejoinder to your note of Wednesday morning, I wrote an answer. Unfortunately on Thursday morning, when it should have moved off into your hands, suddenly the discovery was made that I had written it upon the back of a tailor’s bill. Fearing, therefore, that if the wrong side of the note presented itself first, you might be disturbed by

finding that you owed twenty pounds more than you had supposed, I kept it back ; and now, except as to date (and the tailor's little account), I copy the exact note of Wednesday night.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I was myself aware from the first that it would not be prudent to advance upon unknown ground in this great question (so truly a *national* question) until I had obtained the benefit of your advice. Francis had also not forgotten to convey your caution on the subject a week or two back ; so that I should not have proceeded in the dark. But I am not the less obliged to you for your note of this day ; sensible that your kind intention was to prevent my throwing away any labour. In fact, a mistake as to the point of the Dick Bequest might have made it necessary to recast the whole paper.

"I shall be most gratified by your coming over as you promise, and if a night after Monday, the 16th (any night whatever), would suit your convenience, mine it would suit better than an earlier night.

"I beg my respectful compliments to Mrs. Young ; and am, my dear Sir, ever your faithful servant,

"THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

"P.S.—I have a handkerchief of yours, which Mrs. Young kindly insisted on my taking when I left your house. I reserve it for your use, because if you take it then (having come out as an import), it will go home as an export ; whereas if I send it home now, it will go home as ballast, simply a burden, and of no use to anybody.

"WILLIAM YOUNG, Esq., *Lasswade*."

As bearing on the point of a decisive escape from the excess of opium, we may be allowed here to present the reminiscences of one who was not a casual but a constant and trusted visitor during the greater portion of the Lasswade life, and whose interest in Mr. de Quincey and the family became closer as time went on :—

"Few seem to be aware that Mr. de Quincey almost

entirely overcame his craving for opium, and enjoyed an old age of quiet and repose, which contrasted in the most marked manner with the difficulties and the struggles of his earlier life—especially of those years just after the death of his wife, when his horizon was so cloudy and dark that he would undoubtedly have sunk under it had it not been for the high character, the energy, decision, and premature business capacity which his daughter Margaret manifested at that crisis. With what a struggle the excessive opium habit was conquered it is difficult even to conceive. With a weak constitution, shattered nerves, and a depth of depression which constantly suggested suicide, it required no little strength of will to refrain from an indulgence which promised him at all events temporary relief. Of such constitutions one may well say with Burns—

‘We know not what’s resisted.’

“During his later years, as I have said, he had no anxiety about money, his income being larger than he required. He had a comfortable home always open to receive him, and if he lived a good deal in Edinburgh, it was from some fancied advantage of being near his publishers; and he had got all his family comfortably provided for. Two of his sons, Horace and Frederick, went into the army; the former having gone through the Chinese campaign of 1840–42 under Sir Hugh Gough, and the latter through the Sutlej campaign of 1846; while a third, Francis, educated himself as a medical man under great difficulties, often walking in and out from Lasswade to attend his classes, as lodgings in Edinburgh would have been too great a strain on their income at that time.

“Mr. de Quincey’s whole manner and speech were imbued with as much high-bred courtesy as I ever met with; and this was not a habit put on for ceremonious occasions, but was especially remarkable in his intercourse with servants or with any chance labourer he might meet on the road.

“His conversation was never a monologue, nor did he

generally suggest the topics, but, making use of whatever might turn up, he never failed to raise the tone and to suggest some new and interesting points of view. I think I may safely say, that to no one could the trite aphorism, '*Nihil quod tetigit non ornavit*,' be more truly applied.

"He had also, in a degree that I never saw exceeded except in one instance, the power of drawing out anything that was in those with whom he conversed. He suggested to them new views of subjects, and enabled them to assist him, as it were, in elucidating a subject, with no small satisfaction, as you may believe, to their self-esteem.

"He especially disliked controversy, as anything of the nature of strife was painful to his nature; but he liked discussion in its original sense,—to have a subject tossed about from one to another, becoming gradually better understood as each suggested some new view.

"At one time I used to go very frequently to Mavis Bush in the evenings, and I generally walked home some miles across the country at late hours of the night; and in walking home quietly, I can yet remember with what pleasure I dwelt on these evenings, not so much from what I recalled of his conversation, however excellent, as from the sense that for some hours I myself had been raised to a higher level of thought and feeling than I could otherwise attain to.

"Any friends or admirers who came to visit him were always received most pleasantly and hospitably, and no house in the country had more attractions for people who cared for cultivated conversation. I recollect on one occasion ridiculing the idea of his being a Tory with the intense sympathy he had with progress; and his reply was, that if he were dug up two centuries hence, he would be found a perfect specimen of a 'fossil Tory.'"

Here, if we may judge by results, De Quincey's genius, cast once more amid surroundings so far congenial, overpassed its former versatility and power. In addition to contributions to the *North British Review* in philosophy and literature, and such contributions to

Blackwood as "Coleridge and Opium-Eating" and "Sustirpia de Profundis," which appeared in the course of the year 1846, he was particularly well represented in *Tait*. He contributed to that magazine, in 1845, articles on Godwin, Foster, Hazlitt, and Shelley, and also a most characteristic paper on the Temperance Movement. In the course of 1846 appeared there also the remarkably vigorous and complete essay on "Christianity as an Organ of Political Movement," besides an ingenious article on the Antigone of Sophocles, *apropos* of its renewed presentation on the stage, and essays on Keats, Sir James Mackintosh, and the Marquis of Wellesley. Over and above these articles, there appeared in *Tait*, between 1843 and 1846, the remarkable essay on "Protestantism," the series on "Greek Literature" and the "Greek Orators," as well as the touching episode of George and Sarah Green, which is embodied in the "Autobiographic Sketches" as one of the "Memorials of Grasmere."

The following letter will suffice to show that Professor Nichol in 1846 was desirous, on his own spontaneous movement, to draw closer the ties of intimacy with De Quincey:—

"Wednesday Night, April 15, 1846.

"MY DEAR M.,—Dr. Nichol, always to me a most interesting man, who and whose wife were at Glasgow most kind to me, is now become a far more interesting man: he has destroyed—utterly without mercy cut the lovely throat of—the *Nebular Hypothesis*. You know, of course, what is the *Nebular Hypothesis*. Or if, by some strange chance, you do *not*, then, and on that paradoxical assumption, Florence will explain it fully; or, in *her* default, Emily; or, if Emily should spend too many words over it, then call upon the cat; or, if *he* is gallivanting, then perhaps the *rug* would have the goodness to explain.

"Now, this Dr. Nichol, who has been lecturing to Edinburgh for, I suppose, a fortnight, upon Astronomy, is, you are aware, Professor of Astronomy in the *University*

of Glasgow. This Law Professor in the University of Glasgow has imbibed a strong desire to pay a visit to Lasswade. Upon that point he has communicated with me. Now, listen : would therefore it be inconvenient for him and myself to dine with you on SUNDAY, viz., April 19th? [What do you put so many lines under *Sunday* for, unless you think that nobody can hear if you do not cry at the top of your voice?]

"I *have*, in my possession, and will restore, and have read, Fred's letter from the Punjaub. What a godsend!" *

The next note suggests a touching incident :—

"Thursday, January 1846.

"MY DEAR SIR,—You do not know how much depth of interest I attached to the explanations which I made on Tuesday ; yet I could neither explain the interest, nor sufficiently explain the explanations, in the fervour of a social party. But what I write for is—to communicate an incident to you, which renders all further explanation needless, which to *me* was most expressive, and which in one moment, by the most silent of languages, communicated to me the fact that you never *had* been offended by my two breaches of courtesy ; breaches which were inevitable, but which you could not absolutely know to be such.

"After you had gone away, I noticed a sweet girl, of most charming countenance, sitting at a distance ; who she was, I had naturally no guess even. But, to my utter surprise, she, when taking leave of the company, came up under the guidance of Miss Blackwood, yet so obviously, also, by a spontaneous movement of goodness on her own part, for the sake of claiming an introduction to my unworthy self. When I found that this young lady was the daughter of Delta, I do not know that in my whole life I have been more profoundly touched. She, it appeared too evidently, had never associated my name with any shadow of a thought that I or any man

* This refers to his son Paul Frederick, who was an officer in the 70th Queen's Regiment, passing as interpreter to his regiment.

could mean disrespect to her father; and this convinces me that you, also, had never harboured a thought of that nature.—Ever most faithfully yours,

"THOMAS DE QUINCEY."

In the next note, to Professor Lushington, he gives his opinion about the "Suspiria," which, considering his powers in self-criticism, may be regarded by not a few as having a special value:—

"No man can have descended more profoundly than myself into the consolations of utter solitude, no man can ever have weaned himself more entirely from *dependence* upon sympathy; but, at the same time, perhaps, no man has ever felt it more keenly. . . .

"I would not talk to any man of myself were the matter less interesting to my own feelings and those of my family, and would not that you might think it unfriendly if I claim your attention. Perhaps I told you, when you were last over at Lasswade, of the intention I had (and was then carrying into effect) to write another *Opium Confessionis*; or, if I did not tell you, it must have been only because I forbore to pester you too much with my plans—especially whilst unfinished, and liable to derangements more than one. Now, however, this particular plan, after occupying me for seven months of severe labour, is accomplished. Last Friday I received from the printer a sheet and something more (of *Blackwood's Magazine*), containing the first part out of four. It bears for its title, 'Suspiria de Profundis; being a Sequel to the Confessions of an English Opium-Eater.' And the separate title of this first part is, 'The Affliction of Childhood.' Why I mention beforehand a fact, which would at any rate have become known to you at the beginning of March, is partly for its interest to myself, and partly because I hope that it will possess some interest to you. At least, whatever pleasure you may at any time have found in the original 'Confessions,' to which, in part, I fancy myself indebted for the great kindness shown to me in Glasgow by yourself and Professor Nichol, will probably be trebled in this second

series. One must not praise one's own writings positively, but comparatively one may. I, if at all I can pretend to judge in such a case, think them very greatly superior to the first. And three persons, who took the trouble to read this first part in MS., one of the three being Professor Wilson, have independently of each other communicated to me their sense of the superiority of these present 'Confessions,' by language very much stronger than that which I have used. The four parts, when published in *Blackwood* through March, April, May, June, and July, will be gathered into a volume without any delay, and introduced by a letter of some length to my three daughters. These final 'Confessions' are the *ne plus ultra*, as regards the feeling and the power to express it, which I can ever hope to attain. And I should feel myself disappointed if I failed to obtain a reading from yourself. As respects this *first* part, were it only for its subject, I count also on the honour of a reading from Mrs. Lushington."

In the following letter to Miss Mitford we have some glimpses of his nervous sufferings, and also a hint, which we regard as more significant than it might seem at first sight, respecting the real bearing of opium on his sufferings:—

"MY DEAR MISS MITFORD,—I am stung with compunction—exaggeration there is *not* in that word—when I figure to myself the sort of picture which any outside observer would just now frame of our several shares in the sort of intercourse going on between us. Your condescension on the one side in continuing to answer my daughter's letters, and on the other side my own lordly arrogance (as it certainly would appear to a stranger) in sitting at ease, and addressing you (if *I* can be said to do so at all) by proxy. One fact which my daughter (I believe) has communicated to you, serves to mitigate the atrocity of this picture—viz., that I *did* address to you, and all but finished, a pretty long letter. Perhaps she has not told you that since that I have written two others, in all three. Where are they? you ask. Here—

after I will explain that, and you will then understand that I not only know where they are, but that they are recoverable. Why they disappeared for a time, and how they came to do so, is a point which my daughter could not explain, seeing that she is not at all aware of it. No purpose could be answered by my vainly endeavouring to make intelligible for my daughters what I cannot make intelligible for myself—the undecipherable horror that night and day broods over my nervous system. One effect of this is to cause, at uncertain intervals, such whirlwinds of impatience as precipitate me violently, whether I will or not, into acts that would seem insanities, but are not such in fact, as my understanding is never under any delusion. Whatever I may be writing becomes suddenly overspread with a dark frenzy of horror. I am using words, perhaps, that are tautologic; but it is because no language can give expression to the sudden storm of frightful revelations opening upon me from an eternity not coming, but past and irrevocable. Whatever I may have been writing is suddenly wrapt, as it were, in one sheet of consuming fire—the very paper is poisoned to my eyes. I cannot endure to look at it, and I sweep it away into vast piles of unfinished letters, or inchoate essays begun and interrupted under circumstances the same in kind, though differing unaccountably in degree. I live quite alone in my study, so nobody witnesses these paroxysms. Nor, if they did, would my outward appearance testify to the dreadful transports within. They interpret the case so far as it is made known to them by many practical results of my delay or my neglect, not indolence or caprice. At the worst they put it down amongst my foibles, for which I am sure they find filial excuses. Why should I interrupt their gaiety, which all day long sounds often so beautifully in my ears—a gaiety which at times is so pathetic to me as the natural result of their youth and their innocence—by any attempts to explain the inexplicable? Them it would sadden, and me it could in no way benefit. So I leave them always in cases where I have failed in any promised performance to make that excuse which the circumstances seem most to warrant.

"Meantime, I foresee that your benignity, and the regard with which you honour me, will prompt, as your first question, What have I done, or am doing, towards the alleviation of the dreadful curse? Is there any key, you will say, to its original cause? Sincerely I do not believe there is. One inevitable suggestion at first arose to everybody consulted—viz., that it might be some horrible recoil from the long habit of using opium to excess. But this seems improbable for more reasons than one. 1st. Because previously to any *considerable* abuse of opium—viz., in the year 1812—I suffered an unaccountable attack of nervous horror which lasted for five months, and went off in one night as unaccountably as it had first come on in one second of time. I was at the time perfectly well, was at my cottage in Grasmere, and had just accompanied an old friend of Southey's (viz., Mr. Grosvenor Bedford) round the Lake district." . . .

In the early part of 1847, as we have said, he was in Glasgow, occupying his rooms at 79 Renfield Street. The note we next give has reference to a transference to the hands of his daughters of a portion of annuity from his uncle, Colonel Penson, on the death of his mother. The money was to allow his three daughters to enjoy a trip to the south to visit their father's relations, whom they had not seen. His proposal of himself as a tenant for the Lasswade cottage was no more than a bit of fun; for it had been arranged to shut up the house for a time, and he remained in Glasgow until his daughters returned:—

"79 RENFIELD STREET, GLASGOW,

Tuesday Night, February 23, 1847.

"MY DEAR MARGARET,—Your letter of Sunday last I found lying on the breakfast-table this morning. The money, which comes in April, viz., £42, 9s. 2½d., I make over to you in full; not reserving even the 2½d., as I am sure you will want the whole.

"Now as to the house—hear *who* it is that I propose as your tenant: *myself*. Listen, and I will convince you that I am an eligible tenant. First, I engage to pay the

£8 a month (lunar or calender?): secondly, I engage to pay it in advance. And even more; for, as I shall receive a considerable sum in April, I will—*before* Shakespeare's birthday, St. George's day, April 23—at which day you will (upon your reckoning) still be in Lasswade—send at least *one* month's rent, viz., £8, if not *two*. This will give you a clear £50, if not near £60, exclusive of Bath money, to commence the war upon. I will also send you the 12s. (is it not?) that I owe you, and compound interest upon the said capital sum of 12s.

“Now, mark what will happen if you decline me for a tenant. I am satisfied that the *Bunyil-Carno* or *Bunyip* * will hear of the opening made for introducing the sharp end of his wedge into the house. He will effect a lodgment. True, he is off to Ashantee; but what of *that*? He has agents all up and down the world, and spies. Vengeance is what he thirsts for upon me; and unless some Caboeser at Ashantee cuts his throat, it is by this fatal opening that he will bore his road into the very heart of vengeance. You know that nautical tale (q. Captain Marryat's?) where a dreadful awe settles upon all vessels in the Mediterranean, of a mysterious pirate, that suffered no tales to transpire from any ship captured by *him*,—and behold suddenly in a mist the narrator's ship finds herself captured, and in a very little time they ascertain that her captor is the dreadful pest of the sea, the pirate that walketh in darkness. So, let who will ostensibly treat for the house, the *bonâ fide* tenant will be Bunyip. I know you fancy that if I fell into arrears I might make a ‘moonlight flitting.’ But you are wrong *there*. And besides, if I *did*, that would not be half as bad as the Bunyip's leaving the *dry-rot*

“* ‘*Bunyil-carno*.’—This mysterious creature, otherwise called the *Bunyip*, has never been described or figured by any naturalist; and for a sufficient reason, viz., that it has scarcely been seen by any white man, or only by unsteady hasty glimpses. It has, however, been *heard*; and the profoundest impression yet communicated of its dreadful powers and ferocity is derived from a case where it was *only* heard.”

in the timbers of the house, which he would do to a certainty.

"This plan will not at all interfere with my going to London in your company, which will be highly necessary towards the enabling you to see anything of that tremendous place, which will then be in its very noon of glory. The Opera-house opened in unprecedented splendour last week, and in April an opposition opera opens, not to speak of the great choral performances at Exeter Hall.

"I have got the loveliest of *waltzes* for Emily. Mrs. Lushington has played it for me a dozen of times. It is a perfect dream of beauty. The *written* notes she had not on searching, but has written for them to England.

"Perhaps I shall write to Florence by this enclosure; if not, love to her and Emily.—Ever yours,

"THOMAS DE QUINCEY."

During this tour he wrote regularly, and expected regular letters in return. We give a few of his letters of that period. The "famishing" spoken of below arose from his incapacity for food:—

"*Thursday, June 10, 1847.*

"MY DEAR M.,—I am rather disturbed that neither M. nor F. nor E. has found a moment for writing to me. Yet perhaps it was not easy. For I know very seriously, and have often remarked, how difficult it is to find a spare moment for some things in the very longest day, which lasts, you know, twenty-four hours; though, by the way, it strikes one as odd that the shortest lasts quite as many. I have been suffering greatly myself for ten days, the cause being, in part, some outrageous heat that the fussy atmosphere put itself into about the beginning of this month—but what *for*, nobody can understand, Heat always untunes the harp of my nervous system; and, oh heavens! how electric it is! But, after all, what makes me so susceptible of such undulations in this capricious air, and compels me to sympathise with all the uproars and *miffs*, towering passions or gloomy sulks, of the atmosphere, is the old eternal ground, viz., that I am

famished. Oh, what ages it is since I dined ! On what great day of jubilee is it that Fate hides, under the thickest of tablecloths, a dinner for *me* ? Yet it is a certain, undeniable truth, which this personal famine has revealed to me, that most people on the terraqueous globe eat too much. Which it is, and nothing else, that makes them stupid, as also unphilosophic. To be a great philosopher, it is absolutely necessary to be famished. My intellect is far too electric in its speed, and its growth of flying armies of thoughts eternally new. I could spare enough to fit out a nation. This secret lies—not, observe, in my hair ; cutting off *that* does no harm : it lies in my want of dinner, as also of breakfast and supper. Being famished, I shall show this world of ours in the next five years something that it never saw before. But if I had a regular dinner, I should sink into the general stupidity of my beloved human brethren.

"By the way, speaking of gluttony as a foible of our interesting human race, I am reminded of another little foible, which they have, rather distressingly, viz., a fancy for being horribly dirty. If I had happened to forget this fact, it would lately have been recalled to my remembrance by Mrs. Butler, formerly Fanny Kemble (but I dare say you know her in neither form—neither as chrysalis nor butterfly). She, in her book on Italy, &c. (not too good, I fear), makes this '*observe*,' in which I heartily agree—namely, that this sublunary world has the misfortune to be very dirty, with the exception of some people in England, but with no exception at all for any other island or continent. Allowing for the 'some' in England, all the rest of the clean people, you perceive clearly, must be out at sea. For myself, I did not need Mrs. Butler's authority on this matter. One fact of my daily experience renews it most impertinently, and will not suffer me to forget it. As the slave said every morning to Philip of Macedon, '*Philip, begging your honour's pardon, you are mortal ;*' so does this infamous fact say to me truly as dawn revolves, '*Tom, take it as you like, your race is dirty.*' The fact *I* speak of is this—that I cannot accomplish my diurnal ablutions in fewer minutes

than sixty, at the least, seventy-five at the most. Now, having an accurate measure of human patience, as that quality exists in most people, well I know that it would never stand this. I allow that, if people are not plagued with washing their hair, or not at the same time, much less time may suffice, yet hardly less than thirty minutes. I think, Professor Wilson tells on this subject a story of a Frenchman which pleases me by its *naïveté*—that is, you know, by its *unconscious* ingenuousness. He was illustrating the inconsistencies of man, and he went on thus—‘Our faces, for instance, our hands—why, bless me! we wash them every day: our feet, on the other hand—*never*.’ And echo answered—‘*never*.’”

In the next note will be found a reference to Mr. Grinfield, rector of Clifton, of whom we have already spoken, and from whose letter detailing Winkfield school life we have quoted:—

“ Wednesday, September 8, 1847.

“MY DEAR M.,—For a month I have been very ill, and am only just mending; viz., from a fever, not typhus, but perhaps as bad, caught I believe amongst a poor Irish family. They were one family amongst hundreds—lying out all the summer on the bridges over the Clyde, and on what is called ‘*the Green*,’ a sort of smaller Hyde Park. I talked with many; indeed, walking there, how could I help it? They fastened on me, not I on them; and this family in particular, that I talked with most, being from Galway, bore that picturesque Spanish cast of countenance which Spanish settlers have left in that country; though, I believe, it is now almost lost by diffusion. This Hispanico-Judaic appearance interested me; and I did not know until it was too late, that—though the parents were untouched—the children had a fever amongst them. I suppose it will be no pleasure to anybody that I should describe my intolerable sufferings for the last four weeks. So I delay the account for a century. Before this, however, I suffered so much from the summer heat, acting upon^a

system utterly famished of all nutriment (hares being of course gone, for they disappear a month earlier in *trebly* parsimonious Glasgow than in *doubly* parsimonious Edinburgh), that utter prostration seized me, and, which is far worse, utter nervousness; whence comes the reason that I have not written, or rather *sent* what I really did write, but left unfinished. Oh, the torments of endless famine! This inanition and prostration doubtless predisposed me to the contagion of fever, which indeed is sometimes *self-generated* by such a habit of body. Well, that job's jobbed. I mean, that explanation is made, which I should not have made except to make intelligible my silence.

"I have received two letters from you, both of which were very entertaining to me, and I am much obliged to you for the trouble you took. The first was written immediately after reaching Bletchington; the second was that sent through Francis, in consequence of which it never reached me till August (I think about six weeks ago); *none has reached me since then*. Pray, let me know *where* you are, *how* you are, and what are your plans. From F. I gathered that last month would be spent at *Weston-super-Mare*. You would see Westhay, therefore, and Belmaduthie. Which reminds me to ask—Have you in Bath seen Mrs. Mackenzie? If you do again (which '*again*' is premature, until it is settled that you have seen her at all), give my kind remembrances to her. From Clifton, Mr. Grinfield (who is, I think, rector or vicar or something of that place) wrote three months ago to renew our ancient intimacy, which has rather fallen into arrear, as you will think when I tell you that not one word have we exchanged—written word or spoken—in this present nineteenth century. The last time I saw him—spoke to him—shook hands with him—was in the city of King Bladud, viz., Bath (Pump-room, to wit), in the year of Christ 1800, which year has been many times proved by most mathematical arguments to be the undoubted property, or great toe, of the eighteenth century, without the smallest relationship to any century that *you* are acquainted with. Consequently, there is a huge gap,

as you perceive, in my Grinfield friendship. Yet, if you should meet him, since his letter (besides being complimentary) was really kind, say everything in apology that you know so well—Glasgow Green, Galway-Spanish Jews, fever (not typhus), no dinner since shaking hands with him in the eighteenth century,—in short, everything that ought to account satisfactorily for postponing an answer to his letter. But perhaps I shall postpone it no longer. So that he will say, in that case, and in case of your meeting him, ‘Oh dear! you’re quite misinformed; I’ve heard from him in the present century.’ Bath being so near, and he so much in company I believe, it is not unlikely that you may really meet. I will tell him, when I hear from you, at what date you will reach the city of the late King Bladud. Even Emily will hardly find out by subtraction when that King last saw company: it is a thing that requires algebra. He (not that royal blade, Bladud, but that reverend blade, Grinfield) would, I think, like to meet you; and *I* should like it. Not ‘like to meet you,’ I didn’t mean *that*—I *have* met you at two or three parties—but like that you should meet him.

“At the beginning of my fever I received a present which gave me real pleasure. It was from Walter Savage Landor: his last publication—a volume comprehending all his Latin poems that he wishes to own—and very prettily bound in odorous Russian leather. There is no author from whom I *could* have been more gratified by such a mark of attention.

“Somewhere about the same time I received from an Edinburgh physician, Dr. Tait, who is the medical adviser of the Edinburgh police, a request that I would add a preface or a few notes to a work he is bringing out on opium-eating. He introduced himself through Dr. Handyside of the College, who in some letters he has written to me says that the work is highly thought of by the Edinburgh Medical body, to whom it was privately read in MS. I readily consented—the proof-sheets have since been sent to me as they issued. And I, on my part, have nearly finished an Appendix of 35 to 40 pp.,

some parts of which will make you laugh. Dr. and Mrs. Tait have since given me so pressing an invitation to visit them for as long as I choose, that I shall go, and should have gone before this. How is Florence? I heard with anxiety that she was rather what people call *delicate*. I hope by this time, through sea-air, &c., she has become *indelicate*. Love to her and Emily. Write soon.—Farewell, dear M. THOMAS DE QUINCY."

"Sunday Night (the Sawbath), Sept. 19, 1847.

"MY DEAR FLORENCE,—I received M.'s letter, so entertaining—indeed (as relating to a man so original and full of genius as W. S. L[andor] so interesting—on the 17th, though dated the 12th. One day's delay was due to the servant, who, being busy in cleaning a grate, bade the postman place the letter on a shelf in the kitchen; and subsequently being summoned abroad by the sun and the wind to dry her week's washing (on which mission she staid away till dark), forgot the letter until next day. See upon what accidents things turn. Poor Mrs. Jordan dying in solitude at Versailles—wearing away day by day from that dreadful torment of nervous frenzy so unknown to the world generally, so bitterly known to me, and here and there a martyr—actually *died* in consequence of the mail from England not bringing a letter from one of her daughters, which letter arrived some fews hours after her death. Who knows but the wretched French maid-of-all-work, being busy in cleaning a grate, bade the postman lay that filial letter on that kitchen-shelf—begrimed, no doubt, like this Scotch one, with dust of centuries—and then going out with the 'buckbasket' to the Versailles Green, forgot it until the poor lady was a corpse? There are, however, two days still to account for. Yet, after all, on a journey of four hundred miles this loss is less in proportion to that which generally occurred upon the fifty-three between Lasswade and Glasgow.

"Only about fifty to sixty miles now remain unfinished to connect Glasgow with London and Bath on this western route. For that space you have a dashing mail-

coach, one of the last expiring lamps on that far more interesting system of locomotion. In November, if the weather continues favourable for working, even this last gap in the chain will be filled up. But stop! You cannot wait till November, and, besides, you are engaged to dinner at Clapham on Michaelmas-day—a day sacred to that vulgarest of all luxuries, a roasted goose, whom may Jupiter confound, and all that worship such a vile idol, sacred also to the Archangel Michael. On consideration, I think you will patronise the rail, which also, I really believe, curves round by York—a grander thing than you have yet seen. By the way, it makes me laugh to think what it is you *have* seen of London—a vast assortment, I should think, of chimney-cans, if even those. I dare say you saw several cabmen also, and cabs to match. You know the French phrase of *burning* a place—used in the sense of passing through it with burning wheels. '*Nous brûlâmes Londres,*' says a French tourist, meaning that he went right through London without stopping on his road to Bath. 'Oh, the monster!' says an English critic; 'did I ever think that the rage on account of Waterloo could carry a man such lengths?' Why, no: it *is* odd; but odder still that you, with no Waterloo hatreds, should follow this incendiary example.

"*Landor!* I cannot say how much I was pleased with your Landorian *rencontre*—so gratifying in connection with the memory (for to you the knowledge of his name will be *chiefly* a memory) of a man really so illustrious. Of the two opinions which M. mentions as having surprised but pleased her in Landor, one at least is powerfully expressed and illustrated in his English '*Conversations:*' that, I mean, about Napoleon. It is also repeated with vigorous scorn in his Latin poems. The other, about Sir W. S., may not have been expressed from considerations of courtesy, but I was sure of his feeling it. The opinion about Nell is also expressed in his English works. I am far from agreeing with him. Whatever may be the separate beauty of Nell's position as to character and situation in relation to her grandfather, it is dreadfully marred to me by the extravagance and

caricature (as so often happens in Dickens) of the gambling insanity in the old man. Dickens, like all novelists anxious only for effect, misunderstands the true impulse in obstinate incorrigible gamblers: it is not faith, unconquerable faith, in their luck; it is the very opposite principle—a despair of their own luck—rage and hatred in consequence, as at a blind enemy working in the dark, and furious desire to affront this dark malignant power; just as in the frenzy of hopeless combat you will see a man without a chance, and knowing that he does but prolong his adversary's triumph, yet still flying again with his fists at the face which he can never reach. Without love on the old man's part to Nell, hers for him would be less interesting; and *with* love of any strength, the old fool could not *but* have paused. The risk was *instant*: it ruined Nell's hopes of a breakfast; it tended to a jail. Now Alnaschar delusions take a different flight—they settle on the future. Extravagance and want of fidelity to nature and the possibilities of life are what everywhere mar Dickens to me; and these faults are fatal, because the *modes* of life amongst which these extravagances intrude are always the absolute realities of vulgarised life as it exists in plebeian ranks amongst our countrymen at this moment. Were the mode of life one more idealised or removed from our own, I might be less sensible of the insupportable extravagances.

“But why do I trouble you with all this? Look! before I meant to write, it was already written; and that's the reason; for ink, like blood, cannot be washed out. During my illness, having no books but Mr. Landor's Latin poems, which reached me at its beginning, I read them at times with great interest. It is a pity that so many fine breathings of tenderness and beauty should perish like the melodies of the regal Danish boy, because warbled ‘in a forgotten tongue.’ There is one which beautifully commemorates his mother—apparently an interesting creature and of ancient lineage. I collect from it that she was an heiress, who had the pleasure to step in, as a bride, for the critical rescue of the Landor estates and mansion at the moment when else the parties

who held a mortgage upon them would have foreclosed. The name *Savage*, as I infer, was derived from her; and I presume from the context that she belonged to the Savages of the Earl of Rivers.

"M. tells me in a *P.S.* that you had read 'Schlosser.' By what strange fatality is it that, if I write a hurried paper, by its subject necessarily an inferior one, some friend is sure to show it to you? And no friend thought it worth while to show you the 'Spanish Nun's' passage across the Andes, or the 'Joan of Arc,' which, however, are now going to reappear, with a few words of preface telling the public what *I* think of them, and what place *I* expect for them.

"However, my plans far transcend all journalism high or low. And through fifty different channels I will soon make this mob of a public hear on both sides of its deaf head things that it will not like."

" *Wednesday Morning, October 13, 1847.*

"MY DEAR M.,—Early this morning (that is, about eight o'clock) I received your letter of the —, of the whatth? For you have not *dated* it, which you know in my eyes is almost a capital offence, and to be expiated only by continual tears and contrition.

"You are quite wrong in supposing that I should delay to read it. It is only letters that make me unhappy which I defer, until by accident, perhaps, they never get read at all. Complimentary letters, and letters of amusement from their news or their comments, I read instantly. Yours are in the latter class, and interest me greatly. Your former *very* interesting letter, in which you reported Mr. Landor's visit, &c., I wrote a pretty long answer to; only by misfortune, being not quite finished, it dropped into a chaos of papers occupying a sofa, from which I have never extricated it; having, indeed, the excuse of illness (from the nervous reaction of my fever), so excessive that I have had no moment's peace until, by writing to Dr. Handyside of Edinburgh, I obtained his prescription for compounding the hemlock, which once before did me so much good.

“I will write the letter you wish to Mr. B., and express the gratitude which I feel, if only you will give me his address. Or am I to send it through you? You are too unjust to yourselves in ascribing his very earnest and judicious attentions to the filiality in which you stand to myself. Had you been gawky girls, with brown leathern skins, incipient beards, and shrewish voices, he would, maugre the filiality, have contented himself with writing a note to C., signed, Yours, ladies, with high consideration, and indeed veneration,—X. Y.

“Prior Park was once a place well known to me. We, that is, myself and a schoolfellow, had the privilege of the *entrée* to the grounds. Your aunt J. was too young in those days to know anything of an arrangement which did not interest little misses in the nursery. But in olden times Prior Park was interesting from its connection with Pope. Allen the Quaker, whom Pope (wishing to eulogise) absurdly handed down to posterity as ‘*low-born Allen*’ (think of *that* for a New Year’s gift; but it was altered afterwards on finding that the low-born gentleman found this compliment hard of digestion), was proprietor of Prior Park about a hundred and seven years ago. Thither Pope came to visit him with his testy female friend, Miss Martha Blount. Miss M. got up a quarrel with the female servants, bounced into the room to Pope, said, ‘I’ll not stay another hour in this house,’ and, in spite of Pope’s natural desire to have had explanations, &c., off she went, dragging Pope with her; and at his death (about 1744) she forced him to insult Allen in his will. There you see a specimen of your sex’s fiery rashness. Many years ago I saw by the newspapers that Prior Park had become a Roman Catholic institution—College is it not? It was an elegant object seen from the lateral streets going off from Great Pulteney Street.

“But concerning the Landor visit. At the date of your Bath letter you were under sailing orders for his house. What came of it? Did you sail? or how? Why did you not come back by the Newcastle Railway? On the whole, now it is over, was your English visit satisfactory?

"I am writing an elaborate article on an anonymous book (ascribed by report to three bishops, that is, to some *one* of the three, but the favourite amongst the betters is Dr. Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford). It is entitled 'A Vindication of Protestant Principles,' and a strange book for a bishop to write. What changes does time work! You would rather suppose it written by a German infidel in many parts. But I mention it, because the *press waits* for my MS. However, the press is quite used to waiting for me, and I dare say never takes cold. So don't distress yourself for having been the cause of this little inconvenience, which is not worth mentioning, only that it compels me to break off.

"How is Florence? Did her sea-bathing benefit her at all? Love to her and to Emily. Write as soon as possible, and *date twice over* in atonement for past crimes.—Ever yours, my dear M.,

"T. DE QUINCEY."

The following note refers to a young Greek gentleman with whom De Quincey at this time had some pleasant intercourse :—

"September 12, 1848.

"MY DEAR SIR,—Under circumstances which oblige me to write in a hurry, I take the liberty of introducing to your notice an accomplished young Grecian, Mr. Neocles Jaspis Mousabines. He honours your name and services to this generation; and, from my personal intercourse with him, I can undertake to say that he has been powerfully and unaffectedly impressed by the study of your works. Equally master of modern Greek and English as regards both writing and speaking, he may probably find or make opportunities for diffusing his own deep impressions amongst the more intellectual of his countrymen. I have ventured, therefore, to suppose that you may find a pleasure in conversing with him; whilst, on the other hand, Mr. Mousabines is prepared to understand that, from the pressure of strangers on your time, or from your state of health, or from accidents of personal

convenience, you may find a difficulty in doing so, without meaning any sort of slight to himself.—Ever, my dear Sir, your faithful friend and servant,

“THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

“WM. WORDSWORTH, Esq., *Rydal Mount*.”

On being consulted by a young friend respecting the possibility and the advisability of a literary career, he took occasion to defend the literary class from the aspersions of jealousy, and to show that there may be growth of power as well as of experience :—

“Want of experience, therefore, or insufficient experience, may render my judgment in such a case partially wrong. But at least I can promise you an honest judgment; and next week, when I shall be less oppressed by calls upon my time, this shall be at your service. By an honest judgment I do not mean to insinuate that authors in general are capable of feeling any bias from jealousy lest they should be the means of introducing a fresh competitor into the paths of literature. Far from it. The literary body, as a whole, is honourable and generous. And very few, indeed, I am sure, would give a false report under *this* bias. But most men addict themselves to speaking cynically of contemporary literature, as every age and generation in succession speaks cynically of itself. They persuade themselves that all things are amiss; that the spirit of originality is extinct; and, as every age in turn sees most of the imitative spirit which gathers round the heel of power, these men fancy *that* peculiar to their own times which has merely been brushed away from the face of past times by its own intrinsic perishableness. Now, at least I can hold myself to be free from these too common prepossessions. I see more to admire, more power and vital force of every kind, in my own generation than in any other. And I refuse to be duped by the scenical effects of distance or abstraction. It does not follow that our literature is in a good state. I think it far otherwise; but its faults are not from want of power.

“With respect to the other question, not only is it much more difficult because a *personal* question, allowing for the utmost candour in both parties to such an inquiry, but it is really a dangerous one for any peremptory judgment, and for a reason which, perhaps, you will stare at. The notion is universal that talent, *a fortiori* genius, never grows. All which a man has he has from the beginning. Growth takes place in knowledge, in skill, in address, and many artificial qualities; but not, it is supposed, in downright power. Now, I beg you to suppose that it is no love of paradox which forces me into any opposite opinion. I will not contend as to the absolute metaphysical realities of the case. Whether genius, like coal and diamonds in some theories, is always in a secret state of growth, or whether it is only that a veil clears away from the mind, leaving what was always there more conspicuously visible, either way the result is the same; experience of life, larger comprehension of truth, above all, solitude, grief, meditation, *do* effectually bring out powers in the adult not conjecturally visible in the boy or the very young man.”

There is no record of any such struggles as those of 1844 at a later date, though in 1848 we find that he made an attempt to abstain totally. The relief he had found, after a period of agony, from the reduction of 1844, it doubtless was that led him to such an experiment; but opium had laid too terrible a spell upon him to be lightly shaken off for ever. Say, rather, the chronic weakness or neuralgic affection of the stomach was so established, that this was more than could be reasonably hoped for. Here is one of his records at this time:—

“*Mem.*—That this day, Thursday, November 23, 1848—being my twenty-fourth day of abstinence—after having descended into utter despair, the 17th to the 22nd November having been days of profoundest suffering and utter hopelessness—(rigid obstruction, throbbing without intermission, and sub-inflammation)—to my utter surprise the misery passed off after breakfast, not fully and con-

sciously until about one or half-past one ; so it continued until after cocoa, when for an hour or so a reaction of misery set in, which again passed off ; and now, half-past eleven at night, I am almost as well as before cocoa. On the fifteenth day also (together with the day after or before) I had an intermission. But now it appears more strongly that the cause of my misery must be the alcohol, and the restoration dependent on the offing obtained from this alcohol. If this is the truth, then it will go on ; the advance will not, perhaps, be continuous, but intermitting and *per saltum* ; but it will burst out more and more at intervals like a fugue, until the restoration shall be perfect."

After having at this time abstained wholly for sixty-one days, he was compelled to return to its moderate use, as life was found to be insupportable ; he himself recording afterwards that he resumed its use, on the warrant of his deliberate judgment, as the least of two evils ; and there is no further record of any attempt at total abstinence. His indulgences in opium after this date were, however, very limited.





CHAPTER XXIV.

GLASGOW AND GEORGE TROUP.

DE QUINCEY, as we have said, was again in Glasgow in 1848. His connection with *Tait's Magazine* was the cause in this case. It was transferred to Glasgow through the proprietary rights having been purchased by the then owners of the *North British Daily Mail*. A well-known clever journalist, Mr. George Troup, who had been for some time its editor, was also editor of the *Daily Mail*, and by-and-by proprietor of *Tait*, continued to edit it; and as he had many irons in the fire, he was fain to have De Quincey beside him for a time, with a view probably to aid in some of his other enterprises as well as in *Tait's Magazine*. Troup was a man of versatile and ready gift, of great and admitted power as a Liberal agitator; but in his later days, through unlucky speculations, the shadows of misfortune thickened round him, due, it may be, in some measure to his excess of restless energy leading him always to attempt too much. De Quincey had a very friendly feeling to Troup, who fully returned it. In the sketch of his father's life written by the Rev. George Elmslie Troup we find this reference to our subject:—

“While in Mr. Tait's office he came in contact with several distinguished men. With De Quincey, who often contributed to *Tait's Magazine*, he formed an intimate friendship. Long afterwards, in Glasgow, De Quincey

was a constant and much-appreciated visitor at my father's house. It often happened, when my father was editing and assisting in the work of the magazine, that the proof of one of the great man's articles requiring correction came into his hands; but it was impossible to reach De Quincey, or get him roused up from the effects of his opium. On such occasions I have often heard my father say that the only successful method was to send a message that he was revising the proof, and would *do his best with the Greek quotations*. This at once brought De Quincey to the office. The very idea of a wrong accent or a printer's mistake in his Greek was intolerable."

A friend who knows much of journalistic life in Glasgow at the time recalls that Troup, who was "often too pressed to pay contributors, would sometimes write almost the whole magazine himself, with the help of a clever Irishman, Jemmy Withers, whom I knew well." And another friend, Mr. D. MacDonald, who was then in a position of responsibility in the office, has told me that, about this time, Troup had always half a week or more at the end of the month when *Tait* was on the irons, during which he worked right on without going home to bed, getting no more than snatches of sleep in his chair, which he never quitted till the magazine was printed; so that endurance and persistency he must have possessed in large measure. Often he would fall asleep, of course where he sat, and the business of awakening him was a somewhat difficult matter, from a habit he had on being touched of suddenly starting and throwing out his arms to their full extent. Then he would give himself a shake, run his hand through his locks, and say, "Yes, yes; I'm ready;" and proceed to finish with full effect the articles which he had left off in the middle on falling asleep. He had a habit of carrying on two or three articles at once, and would sometimes, in numbering or heading the slips, mix them up; and then a gentle hint had to be given him to get the matter put right after it had been "put in type."

De Quincey's kindly feeling for Troup now led him to exchange the Edinburgh air for the smoky atmosphere of

Glasgow, which he liked not, and he wrote a good deal one way or another, but nothing of particular importance. One cannot help regretting that, under any impulse whatever, he was led to waste time in this kind of desultory work, when he might, with the most ordinary precaution and practical tact, have been in a position to pursue his own lofty speculations and produce some great work. But we must accept him as we find him.

Mr. Colin Rae-Brown, in the first of the numbers (January 7, 1881) of the luckless resuscitated *London Scotsman* (which did not long survive its untimely resuscitation), told the story of De Quincey's entrance on Glasgow life at this period in a very genial spirit; and from it we venture to extract this paragraph:—

“In 1848 the proprietors of the *Daily Mail* purchased *Tait's (Edinburgh) Magazine*, and I was translated to its headquarters, the *Mail* office in Glasgow, commissioned to arrange with Thomas de Quincey for a visit to the northern Cottonopolis, so that he (as the magazine's most valued contributor) might be able to give us the benefit of his sage experience in the compilation of the well-known monthly. I therefore arranged to meet him in Edinburgh with the view of coming on to the West together. Before a precise date for my journey had been fixed De Quincey wrote to me, stating that he was most desirous of procuring ‘comfortable but modest apartments: a sitting-room and bedroom (not to exceed a given price per week) in the most elevated situation of the town, and within a mile or so of the printing-office.’ Conceiving that such a man would be rather particular in his domestic arrangements, and a stickler for neatness, cleanliness, &c., I did not find my mission an easy one—hampered as I was with the moderate estimate which the celebrated essayist had set down as his figure of weekly rental. Nevertheless I eventually managed to make what I considered (and experience proved) a very satisfactory arrangement with a decent widow living in the still existing street known in Glasgow as ‘the Rotten Row.’ It is situated in the near vicinity of the Cathedral, on the northern heights of the city, not far from the ancient

University (now disused as a seat of learning), and close to the remains and sights of not a few celebrated residences, once occupied by ecclesiastical dignitaries and nobles whose 'doings' occupy no small space in the chronicles of Scotland and of 'ancient Sanct Mungo.' Suffice it to say, that the renowned English 'Opium-Eater' was immensely pleased with his lodgings and his cleanly, tidy, and kindly landlady—to whom, from the day when he first crossed her threshold, he became a source of 'muckle wonderment!' 'Never,' she remarked to me, 'have I come across onie grown-up bodie that ate and drank as little as my lodger: my wee bit oe [grandchild], Willie, eats as muckle in ae day as Mr. de Quincey does in three.' The only trouble Mr. de Quincey gave me was his delay in finishing *copy*. Frequently the half of an article lay in type for a whole week, sometimes longer, before the second portion came to hand, and not infrequently the last 'hour of grace' had expired when the concluding *copy* came to hand."

And he adds, fully confirming what has been said by Mrs. Baird Smith:—

"One of the peculiar characteristics of this 'old man eloquent' was the little regard he paid to money matters. 'Could I,' he would say, addressing me, 'have a pound or two till there is something due me?' when all the time some £20 or £30 was actually standing to his credit, and to be had for the asking; he never seemed to know whether he was in debt to the 'office' or the 'office' to him, the latter being the rule. What I told him on Monday would quite escape his mind by the middle of the week. Pronunciation, pure and undefiled as his own exquisite English, seemed quite a hobby with De Quincey. Shortly before he returned to Edinburgh he and I were having our usual modest chop in a quiet tavern (The Rose in Argyle Street, Glasgow), when I happened to refer to our *North British Daily Mail* Paris correspondent, Percy B. St. John, pronouncing the surname broadly and northerly, as follows: 'Saint—John,' whereupon my *vis-à-vis* gently raised his thin, transparent little hand, looked at me seriously, and gently

uttered the words, 'Singen, if *you* please; Singen.' He never let what he considered mispronunciation go unrebuked; but there was pleasure in the rebuke—it was always given in a gentle, almost a loving, spirit. Small in stature, of a very spare physique—a type of man well illustrated by the late Dean Stanley and the present Cardinal Manning—his pale, transparent face literally beamed when he engaged in conversation, displaying an earnest, *spirituel* expression which no intelligent listener could ever fail to keep in remembrance."





CHAPTER XXV.

THE LAST TEN YEARS—MRS. BAIRD SMITH'S REMINISCENCES.

THE ten last years embrace a period of quiet and steady activity. He was well cared for, as Mr. Hill Burton has said, whether at Lasswade or at Lothian Street, Edinburgh, and abandoned to a great extent his wandering propensities. In these years he accomplished some bits of work which students are as much inclined to prize as the earliest and freshest of his efforts—notably several of those chapters of “Recollections of Infancy,” which are now embodied in the volumes of “Autobiographic Sketches.” He returned to Lasswade in the end of 1848, and lived there without intermission till the earlier half of 1854.

Some of his peculiar habits, in spite of the loving tendance and care of which he was now the subject, were, however, persevered in. He still sat and wrote at night, refreshing himself with tea or coffee in large quantity—went to bed in the early hours, woke at midday, and devoted a large part of the time while daylight lasted to wandering about the country, or in the pleasant, lonely lanes in the neighbourhood of his house. Or, if by any chance he was unable thus to gratify himself, he would take compensation by indulging in a starlight ramble. Many, doubtless, are the light-headed country bumpkins who, returning from adventures of love or whisky, have been scared by his

thin light figure in odd habiliment, his feet in list shoes — his favourite wear — advancing silently and suddenly upon them in the darkness.

It will not, perhaps, seem out of place here to introduce some reminiscences by Mrs. Baird Smith, as they chiefly deal with the Lasswade life :—

“ My father's love for children, and power of winning their confidence, was one of his loveliest characteristics. My own first awaking to the fact that I had a father grew out of the restless nights of a delicate childhood, when my small ill-regulated uproar was sure to bring the kind, careful arms which rescued the urchin from a weariful bed and the wisdom of nursery discipline, and brought it to the bright warm room, and the dignity and delight of ‘ sitting up with papa.’ This papa, after a petting and soothing process of inexpressible sweetness, and coffee well loaded with sugar, had always some delightful book, exquisite to the sense of smell, as a book always was to the family nose, and to the eyes, because of pictures, about which, when they became too amazing for the restraining sense that ‘ papa must not be disturbed,’ he had always something wonderful or beautiful to tell. The leaves of this book had generally to be cut, and much breathless joy came of the careful teaching how this was to be done, so that there might be no ragged edges ; reverence for the person of a book being among our early lessons. The triumph of the small operator and the applause of the audience over a well-executed work was the chorus to each opened page. In my memory there seems an unending supply of these books ; but perhaps really little was done, as the little creature fell asleep sooner than was its heroic intent, which was to ‘ sit up *all* night with papa.’

“ As a girl between ten and twelve, I was his constant and almost only companion, and was never so happy as with him. The unfailing gentleness of his temper, and tender attention to the feeblest of girlish thoughts and interests, the unconscious way to both of us in which he turned these into high meanings, without overshooting the power of the child, was one of those wonderful and

gracious gifts, like his power of conversation, which it was as impossible to catch and bottle for future use as it would have been to have bottled the sunshine of those days.

"This humbling of himself without effort or any appearance of condescension to little children was not confined to his own children, nor, with all his delicate refinement, to the children of any class; the most nefarious baby in the arms of the most impossible of mothers was a sure passport to, it might often be, his last shilling. And nearly the last time we were together, his almost constant companion for some time every day was the nephew of one of our maids, a child of about four, who, solely for the pleasure of conversation, walked round and round a dull little garden with him. Of this boy I remember one story which amused us. He had asked my father, 'What d'ye ca' thon tree?' To which my father, with the careful consideration which he gave to any question, began, 'I am not sure, my dear, but I think it may be a *Lauristinus*;' when the child interrupted him with some scorn, 'A *Lauristinus*! Lad, d'ye no ken a *rhododendron*?' The 'lad' must have been about seventy at the time.

"One of my memories of him in bright summer mornings was his capturing my baby sister, fresh from her bath, possibly because there had been some slight fracas over that operation between her and her nurse, and dancing her about the garden; the child, with its scanty white raiment and golden head, looking like a butterfly glowing among the trees.

"My father's habits were simple, almost to asceticism. Owing to the neuralgic suffering, which led to his first taking opium, he early lost all his teeth; and, from the extreme delicacy of his system, he could eat nothing less capable of perfect mastication than bread, so that only too often a little soup or coffee was his whole dinner. He was able to take very little wine, even according to the standard of the present day. His dress, unfortunately, he neither cared for himself, nor would he let others care for it. I say unfortunately, because

this carelessness gave rise among punctilious people, unaccustomed to eccentric habits, to an impression of poverty for which there was no foundation. It might be that a thought occurred to him in the midst of some of his irregular processes of dressing or undressing (I should say, some thought generally did strike him at that time), and he would stop with his coat just taken off or not put on, without stockings at all, or with one off and one on, and becoming lost in what grew out of this thought, he would work on for hours, hardly even noticing the coffee, which was his chief support at such times. In the midst of this absorbing work would arrive visitors, of whom there were many, probably from such a distance that they could not be turned back without sight of the object of their long pilgrimage; upon which my father, with the unaffected courtesy which was one of the great charms of his character, would appear at once, rather than keep them waiting while he put on the other stocking, or whatever might be wanting, or, which was just as likely, in the wrong place, giving rise to awed impressions of poverty with some, while those who could withdraw their unaccustomed eyes from the nakedness of the land, as expounded by his feet, might have seen in his surroundings such signs of scrupulous neatness, sufficient comfort and refinement, as must have reassured them on this point. For, not long after my mother's death, my father, feeling his own singular incapacity for the management either of a household or of young children, and always most willing, by self-sacrifice, to further any plan for their good, had consented to give up to the management of his eldest daughter, still but a girl, a small fixed income, and by her admirable judgment and honourable economy, there was from that time always a comfortable, cheerful home, wholly free from embarrassment, where he was anxiously looked for as giving us the best chance of gratifying those tastes which association with him had awakened in us. From this time I believe he had no fresh difficulties to hamper him; those which remained being rather the remnants of previous misman-

agement, the growth of two phases of extravagance, which, the more we think of them, the more they seem the result of some strange failure of intellect—they were so purposeless, and brought such unspeakable pain to his own higher nature and to those he loved. From the first of these phases, which can only be described as a wanton charity, no doubt he did gain some comfort for his own exquisite suffering for the suffering of others. His presence at home was the signal for a crowd of beggars, among whom borrowed babies and drunken old women were sure of the largest share of his sympathy; but he refused it to none, and he was often wearied by the necessity he laid upon himself of listening to all the woes which were heaped upon him. This, of course, was that development of his keen sympathy with suffering which cost him least; there were others which became very serious, but which his own sanguine belief in his own powers of work always led him firmly to believe he should be able to meet; and indeed he was a hard and unceasing worker, but the character of his work points to the impossibility of his being able generally to produce it up to time.

“His other extravagance grew out of the morbid value he set upon his papers and their not being disturbed. He was in the habit of accumulating these till, according to his own description, he was ‘snowed up,’ which meant, when matters came to such an extremity that there was not a square inch of room on the table to set a cup upon, that there was no possibility of making his bed for the weight of papers gathered there, that there was no chair which could be used for its legitimate purpose, and that the track from the door to the fireplace, which had always to be considered, had been blotted out, even for his own careful treading; then he locked the door upon this impracticable state of things, and turned elsewhere; leaving his landlady, if simple and honest, fearfully impressed with the mysterious sin of meddling with his papers, but, if dishonest, with such a handle for playing upon his morbid anxieties, as was a source of livelihood. At his death there were, I believe, about

six places where he had these deposits, it may be imagined at what expense.

"Such a thing has been known as his gradually in this way 'papering' his family out of a house, but in later years his daughters in the home at Lasswade were wary, and the smallest deposit of papers was carefully handed down into the one irrecoverable desert in which he worked when he left them after spending the evening with them, which he almost always did. These evenings were very pleasant. The newspaper was brought up, and he, telling in his own delightful way, rather than reading the news, would, on questions from this one and that of the party, often including young friends of his children, neighbours, or visitors from distant places, illuminate the subject with such a wealth of memories, of old stories, of past or present experiences, of humour, of suggestion, even of prophecy, as by its very wealth makes it impossible to give any taste of it. It was the happiest flow of real conversation growing out of the circumstances of the moment, in which the youngest and shyest of the party, encouraged by his gentleness and power of sympathy, that made him catch in a moment what the stammering youth or maiden might wish to say, took their part.

"He was not a reassuring man for nervous people to live with, as those nights were exceptions on which he didn't set something on fire, the commonest incident being for some one to look up from work or book to say casually, 'Papa, your hair is on fire,' of which a calm 'Is it, my love?' and a hand rubbing out the blaze was all the notice taken. One evening a maid rushed in upon two quiet girls with a horrified face and in a burst of smoke to announce that Mr. de Quincey's room, by this time on the point of being 'snowed up,' was on fire. Some important papers and a little money were secured, and then they descended to the scene of action to find that a hard frost had taken away all chance of help from water; but the Mississippi might have flowed past his door, and Mr. de Quincey would have had none of it, as it would have ruined the beloved papers. He there-

fore determined to conquer the fire without water, or to perish with them. All he would take in was a heavy rug; and he locked the door in dread of the abhorred water being poured in, in spite of the injury the fire might cause. Presently we were assured that all danger was over, though, in the presence of occasional bursts of smoke, and a very strong smell of fire, it argued an extraordinary confidence in his power of manœuvring with that dread element that we all went to bed and slept.

“The fascination of my father’s presence must have, in some measure, conveyed itself into his writings, for from the days of my girlhood I recall the difficulties that sometimes arose from a surplus of visitors, and his concern lest any of them—those from a distance especially—who desired to come and see him, might suffer inconvenience or the appearance of being treated with discourtesy. Many were the Americans who favoured us with their society, particularly during the later years, but I do not remember a single instance in which anything but pleasant recollections were left behind. And often, when we were away from home, we met with unexpected attentions, simply and solely, we believe, on our father’s account, from those who had met him or had become interested in his works. One of the most memorable cases of this kind was our meeting Mr. W. S. Landor in Bath in 1847, when we were paying our first visit to our father’s relatives in the south. My sisters and I were then with our aunt at Weston; and Mr. Landor, having heard we were there, called to invite us to his house. We found him delightful company, as did my aunt. She was fond of gardening, and had a very fine garden, which Mr. Landor particularly admired; and this led to an expression so characteristic, that I risk a slight digression in order to record it. On his noticing some fine trees, my aunt remarked that they were not so beautiful as they were, as they had recently been lopped. On this Mr. Landor immediately said, ‘Ah! I would not lop a tree; if I had to cut a branch, I would cut it down to the ground. If I needed to have

my finger cut off, I would cut off my whole arm !' lifting up that member decisively as he spoke. Landor was then living in St. James' Square, and we visited him there.

"As expressions of my father's great concern lest visitors should have cause to feel in any way slighted, I may give here some illustrative letters. They will, I think, speak for themselves :—

" 'TO MR. JOSIAH QUINCEY.

" 'Tuesday Morning, June 19, 1855.

" 'MY DEAR SIR,—I am concerned to learn that you have had so much trouble and so little success in seeking for my scattered household. My two sons are in Brazil and India ; my two youngest daughters are visiting at Boston in Lincolnshire ; my eldest daughter is transplanted by marriage to Tipperary in the south of Ireland ; and I myself am in lodgings for the moment in Edinburgh. I received your obliging note on Saturday night. On the next day, being Sunday, I forbore to call upon you ; because, though I for my own part do not scruple to pay and receive visits on a Sunday, I was not entitled to assume that you took the same view on such a subject as myself. Throughout yesterday, from an early hour in the morning, I was unavoidably occupied by a troublesome law affair relating to a guarantee for house-rent which I had been imprudent enough to give. To-day, I am altogether at your service ; and as I should most unwillingly miss any opportunity of seeing a member of your distinguished family, I would request of you to inform the bearer *orally*—so as to evade all trouble in writing—at what hour of the day I should be likely to find you at home.—I remain, my dear Sir, your faithful servant,

'THOMAS DE QUINCEY.'

" 'Sunday, June 24, 1855.

" 'MY DEAREST FLORENCE,—Last night—viz. Saturday night, and the clock being on the stroke of ten, when every successive minute was bringing *Hobson's choice* into wider empire,—I remembered that I had no paper ;

and seeing at that moment a solitary stationer's shop—"the last rose of summer"—still open, I went in and bought a *slip* (which means 12 sheets, or half an English quire) of this strange-looking note-paper. From Brobdingnag* it must have been imported; and might be used appropriately in writing to the children of Anak, but seems as affronting when used in addressing a young lady, as it would be to send her a ledger two feet high by way of pocket souvenir. So, to heal the affront, I rehearse the history of the case. The letters of the Anakim, meantime, will not necessarily pay extra postage; a tall letter is not, therefore, a heavy letter. But a worse fate may possibly threaten this letter,—viz., that it may founder in attempting to enter the narrow port of an ordinary envelope.

"But stop! Suddenly at this point it occurred to me that it might be as well, before embarking more words upon my frail sheet of paper, to settle the question whether any envelope in my possession would meet the extra demand upon it. Would the port receive the ship? Naturally, therefore, I directed a more considerate and searching eye upon my letter, and found to my astonishment that I was—whilst supposing myself writing upon a sheet of Cyclopean dimensions—actually half-way through a letter of very commonplace quality upon a very commonplace size of paper. Heard ever man or woman the like of that? Starting with the strong preconception that I had no paper but that one forementioned slip of pre-Adamitic proportions, I had persisted unconsciously in viewing my actual paper through a visionary magnifying-glass. It turned out upon examination that exactly one sheet remained of a common-sized slip purchased some ten days ago; and this slip being accidentally of the same thin quality as the mammoth slip purchased last night, naturally enough, when stumbling by mistake upon this remainder unit of a vanished flock, I was misled by the thinness into supposing myself ranging over the vast Asiatic steppes of the last night's purchase—huge Megatherium heaths or chases, where one has room to misspell

"* 'Brobdingnag,'—people generally write *Brobdignag*; but that is a faulty spelling."

over half-an-acre, and yet to redeem one's credit along the ample spaces in the rear—room to talk enormous nonsense for hours, and yet to have it all forgotten before the ending—room for being a baddish fellow, and for sowing one's wild oats, in the first page, and yet long before cutting into p. 4 room for a huge sweep round into repentance, and for wheeling into the character of a saint. Now, that I should have made this mistake, and should unconsciously have submitted to it so long as nothing arose to force any keen attention upon the true proportions of the paper, is such an oversight as may be pardoned to human stupidity, and especially on a sultry day. But that, *after* my consciousness in a bright magnetic current had been forced upon the realities of the case, I should continue to read in the object before me the features belonging to the imaginary object, seems to me a preternatural stupidity, and perhaps worthy of being advertised in the *London Gazette*. I fancy to myself at this point Miss Mary Gee, whose fine sense in times past sometimes wore a satiric aspect, saying, "Now, if not by himself, but by us, this oversight had been charged upon him as a stupidity, he would have been angry." No, he wouldn't. O my dear Florence, I rattle in order to beguile my deadly nervousness. But I suffer what I cannot describe. Not the less I strive, to the utmost of what I *know* as practically useful, and fight continually against it. This very day, though annoyed by the crowds of people rushing to or from their favourite preachers, I have just returned from my daily walk of seven miles; not much certainly, but as much as I can find spirits for. And, by the way, this walk lying by accident through Morningside, on returning about 4 P.M. I met——*Whom?*

"This question, for fear you should think my story about the mammoth slip of paper tending to the fabulous, I will answer on a sheet from that same slip; for indeed I am now left without any other.

"I.—Who was it that I met in Morningside? It was a person whom, I think, you know by sight, and certainly our Tipperary M. does—viz., Mr. Watson of Princes Street, the bookseller, so famous for his unrivalled series

of autographs, stretching (I believe) through forty or more folios. But what do *you* care for this man of forty folios, or for the forty folios themselves, any more than for the forty thieves of "Ali Babi"? True; and pity 'tis 'tis true. But why I mentioned him is, because he recalled to me a fact which perhaps I ought to have reported. Saturday last but one, or (more briefly) on the *penultimate* Saturday—viz., Saturday the 16th of June—on returning from my seven miles, I found on my table a note from Mr. Josiah Quincey, jun., mentioning that he had gone over to Mavis Bush for the purpose of calling on you and Emily; that, on returning much disappointed, he had fallen in with Mrs. Chambers, who communicated my address, and that, of course, he was languishing to see me. What could I do? Ranging, as I do so often, amongst people eaten up with Sabbath scruples and superstitions, I could not venture to call on a Sunday without special permission. So I staid till Monday. But on Monday came a point-blank necessity for attending to a matter of pressing business. Seldom comes such a day to me; but now it really did. On Monday night, with dolorous apostrophes to you two in Lincolnshire as agents indispensable to the conducting of my correspondence, but mysteriously absent, I scratched out a note as friendly as was due to the brother (or *nephew* is it?) of our old and most obliging correspondent, Miss Q. These Quinceys, you are aware, compose a most distinguished family in Boston. I sent an intelligent messenger with this note, able to give discretionary answers upon any question or difficulty that might arise. But all was labour lost. At the Royal Hotel, all that could be told of Mr. Josiah's movements was, that at nine o'clock on Monday morning, being the deathless day of Waterloo, he had departed this life—no, what nonsense I am talking!—not this life, but this city, for a better—no; not for a better, but for a worserer—viz., Greenock. This seemed to imply embarkation for America. And so, in fact, it did, as I learned just now from Mr. Watson. Upon him did Mr. Josiah, jun., call; and I am bound to speak gratefully of the lamenta-

tions which he uttered to Mr. Watson, and thought it worth his while to reiterate more than either once or twice, upon the bad luck which had caused our household to be so widely scattered—viz., one in Tipperary, two in Lincolnshire, one in Edinburgh, one in Brazil, and one in Lahore (is it not ?), or in that neighbourhood. On the whole, therefore, if either of you ever speculated on becoming Mrs. Josiah (or Jeremiah, for by the glory of his lamentations *that* must be his true name), I hold that your ticket has sunk in the market by 50 per cent. But, lastly, and very seriously, I am sorry, and most sincerely so, that we all lost this opportunity of showing civilities to the representative of a family so advantageously known in America by patriotic services, and to ourselves in particular known by so continued a series of most obliging attentions.

“‘II°.—Having thus been led casually to report one article of news, I am led by the contagious spirit of gossip into telling a second. I have received of late several letters from strangers of the old fashion so well known to you, but from new people. I think I cannot have mentioned them to you. But one I *will* mention, which I received last Wednesday from a fair *incognita*. She gives me an address in Sloane Street, Chelsea, and I am already gratified by the interest she expresses in some part of my writings, so amiably is it expressed, with so much fervour and simplicity, and wearing all the marks of sincerity.

“‘Love to Miss Gee and to Emily.

“‘I should pity you for having such a task of reading before you as this long, long letter offers, only that it is really within the power of people with the half of your deciphering skill to read my writing fluently and without checks.

“‘I have several things to say, and will write again immediately.—Ever most affectionately yours,

‘THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

“‘It is now 9 P.M. on Sunday night. My letter is going to the General Post-Office, but I doubt its going to-night.’

“‘Sunday Night, June 6, 1858.

“‘MY DEAR EMILY,—I forward to you Mr. Prof. Alexander’s note to myself from the Coburg Hotel, in that tip-top quarter of London West, Charles Street, Grosvenor Square.

“‘I shall write *to-morn’s morn* to our new friend the Coburg—a theatre of that name I once knew, but never yet a hotel. Indeed, I knew the theatre only too well—viz., by living in too close neighbourhood to its savage nightly uproars, and especially in those days to the mid-night explosion of the Kremlin.

“‘To return, however, from the Kremlin to the note of *to-morn’s morn*, I shall say to Mr. Alexander, that according to your original plan, if not miscalculated by me, your return to Lasswade would *at any rate* fall upon the longest day (June 21, 22) or thereabouts. To-morrow completes the first *ephthemeron*, or series of seven days in June. Now, in twenty-one days there is a first, a second, a third such phenomenon. One is gone, and pretty nearly irrevocable. A second would reasonably be consumed in exchanging kisses, summoning the washer-woman, and paying our ‘little accounts.’ So that the total controversy and polemics would settle upon the third *ephthemeron*, and *that* only—namely, from mid-night on the 14th of June to midnight on the 21st. Within these two limits lies the whole range of your possible sacrifices on behalf of Mr. Alexander. And of course you would first choose to ascertain from Mr. A. himself whether any sacrifice at all would promote his convenience. I will hold myself in readiness according to what I hear on this great argument from Boston.’

“The next is a letter of somewhat similar character:—

“‘42 LOTHIAN STREET,
Friday, December 10, 1858.

“‘MY DEAR SIR,—I was sorry to hear—which, until Wednesday night, I had no opportunity of hearing—that you had called upon me, and had sent messages

(one or more) ineffectually. My landlady's sister could inform you that I had gone out, but not the *whither*; and if, upon her suggestion, any letter was addressed to me at Lasswade, it will have travelled in the very opposite direction to the true one.

“I write, move, do all things under a most distressing bodily affection, one which is properly a surgical case; intermittingly it gives me much pain, but (which is more relevant to the purpose before me) much nervous impatience. The shortest letter is an oppression to me; and for the last four months I have felt myself compelled to retreat from all conversation or personal communications with visitors. Pardon me my apparent discourtesy, and I will endeavour to make amends by the circumstantiality of my *written* explanations. Even this mode of communication has its own separate irritations, for the pens that one is now forced to use—any at least that fall in *my* way—are as flexible as the poker—not more so certainly in any case, but (when specially good) not less.

“I presume that the call with which you favoured me had reference to the “Pope” paper in the “Encyclopædia Britannica.” In a brief note of yours several months back, though not at this moment before me, I remember that you alluded *inter alia* to the case of the Blounts as a chapter in Pope's life about which much scandal had gathered, much malicious guessing, and (of late years I suppose it has been proved) much downright misstatement. Without pretending to any minute acquaintance with the successive stages of research and discovery amongst the students of Pope's biography, I have a vague impression that Mr. Carruthers of Inverness has established the fact (has he not?) of two separate Blount families contemporary with Pope, and I believe more or less connected by friendship with Pope; and such a fact, interesting for itself, but more especially if it has led to any of the conjectural scandal disfiguring his memory, is certainly entitled to a pointed notice. Other questions connected with Pope and Pope's era, and useful towards a full appreciation of the man or of the

author, might take their place reasonably enough in a few supplementary paragraphs to the paper as it now stands. But, as an addition, by its nature and its urgency outrunning any other, I should propose to close with about a single page indicating and appraising Pope's place in the long development of literature, and the memorable stage which he reached for himself, and suggested to others, of a poetry pretending to no altitudes of inspiration, but dwelling and abiding within the tents of ordinary life.

“That the functions of Pope have never been truly understood, not even by himself, seems to me attested by expressions in use amongst us having the currency of proverbs. One thing let me add: such a winding-up, assigning to Pope his true place in the evolution of our literature, would reflect upon the article a colouring of meditateness and deliberation which (if I remember) at present it wants.

“Remains to ask

- | | |
|---------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. What space | } is disposable for this addition? |
| 2. ——— time | |

“As to the first, my wishes are moderate enough—three pages of the “Encyclopædia” size will suffice. But as to time, I should wish to hear your own estimate of what is possible. I have never been able to write fast, and am now less able than ever.—Pray believe me, ever very truly yours,

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.’

“The following letter to the Rev. Francis Jacox also bears so far in illustration of the characteristics of my father just dwelt on, that it may perhaps be not unfitly inserted here:—

“December 20, 1851.

“MY DEAR SIR,—I am not much better able to write letters *now* than when heretofore I delegated to my daughter Florence the duty of replying to your kind communications. But the *persistency* (to speak neologically) of your kindness, and of your determination not to be offended at what, under ordinary circumstances,

would have seemed slights, absolutely coerces me into writing with my own hand.

“‘I observe by your reference to Gombroon, an island about which that wretched Dane, Malte Brun, lived and died in the grossest ignorance (what Lord Brougham would describe as “crass” ignorance), that you have been looking into Mr. Hogg’s *Instructor*. If you are in search of geographical novelties, be assured that it is the best of guides. I doubt whether anywhere you would find the *ubi* of Gombroon indicated within a thousand leagues. Now, Hogg at least shows on which side of the equator it lies, which really is more than can be found in the very best charts authorised by the Admiralty.

“‘Yet, and except always for these geographical merits, do I otherwise ratify with my sanction the papers of mine in the *Instructor*, or rejoice that any friend reads them? Really I do not know. I compose with prodigious difficulty at this time; and with still greater difficulty I come to any judgment afterwards upon what I have written. But this I *do* know, that here, as always, I have written my best. That is, given the conditions under which I wrote, which conditions might chance to be very unfavourable—hurry, for example, exhaustion, dissatisfaction with my subject, &c., and latterly overwhelming nervousness—these allowed for, always I have striven to write as well as I could. And in this case, dreadful as are my nervous hindrances, there are two pointed advantages. I write about facts in the first place; and secondly, the narrow limits of this particular journal *enforce* brevity; and, where there is no choice, *that* makes one anxiety the less. The act of choosing brings with it a dreadful nervous distraction.

“‘Well, I have thus written a letter, which so rarely I do. And the fault of it being that it is too exclusively about my own concerns, let me mend that fault, or balance it, by saying a word or two on a matter concerning yourself. We (that is, my three daughters and myself) were all sorry to find that you had formerly visited Edinburgh, and perhaps (if we read you rightly) even Lasswade, without calling on us. You will not do so

again; for now, so far from needing an introducer, you have power to introduce others. If you like music and laughter, you will hear a good deal of both from my daughters. We can also show you Roslin, not two miles distant; and take you on Sunday to a pretty little Episcopal Chapel at Dalkeith (if you do not object to a *soupçon* of Puseyism); and we can introduce you to the famous grounds of Hawthornden on *any* day, whereas the base public, that has no wedding-garment to show, can enter only on Wednesdays, in company with Jews, Pagans, Pariahs, Radicals, Red Republicans, and other *canaille*. Finally, which may be of even more importance, we can offer you a bed.

“Ever your faithful and affectionate servant,

‘THOMAS DE QUINCEY.’

“My father’s unfailing courtesy has been pleasantly noticed by several of our American visitors, and, among others, in the *Baltimore American*, by Mr. Oliver White, who, in recording his impressions of a visit paid to us in 1854, amongst other things, made reference to his consideration for the feelings of those for whom sometimes it may be that too little consideration is shown:—

“‘There was a few moments’ pause in the “table-talk,” when one of the daughters asked us our opinion of Scotland and the Scotch. De Quincey had been in a kind of reverie, from which the question aroused him. Turning to us, he said, in a kindly, half-paternal manner, “The servant that waits at my table is a Scotch girl. It may be that you have something severe to say about Scotland. I know that I like the English Church, but I never utter anything that might wound my servant. Heaven knows that the lot of a poor serving-girl is hard enough, and if there is any person in the world of whose feelings I am especially tender, it is of those of a female compelled to do for us our drudgery. Speak as freely as you choose, but please reserve your censure, if you have any, for the moments when she is absent from the room.” *Un gentilhomme est toujours un gentilhomme*, a man of

true sensibility and courtesy will manifest it on all occasions, towards the powerless as well as towards the strong. . . . For half-an-hour, at least, he talked as we never heard another talk. We have listened to Sir William Hamilton at his own fireside, to Carlyle walking in the parks of London, to Lamartine in the midst of a favoured few in his own house, to Cousin at the Sorbonne, and to many others, but never have we heard such sweet music of eloquent speech as then flowed from De Quincey's tongue. To attempt reporting what he said would be like attempting to entrap the rays of the sun. Strange light beamed from that grief-worn face, and for a little while that weak body, so long fed upon by pain, seemed to be clothed with supernatural youth.'

"On some occasions, however, we used to think, with some little amusement, that this courtesy was not always appreciated, as in the case of an ignorant young girl just out of her village home, who, after a short time, left us for no assigned reason, but, on being questioned, confessed she was 'feared o' Mr. de Quincey, he used such awfu'-like language'—the awfu'-like language being his gentle and quite needless explanations of why he wanted a scuttle of coals or a cup of coffee, which were given in language to which she certainly was not accustomed. To balance this, there was offered on one occasion by an admirer in the same condition of life the following tribute: 'Ah, Mr. de Quincey, you are a great man, a very great man; *no* body can understand you!'"

Many stories are told of the impressions that his careless, poverty-stricken attire and his odd ways made upon strangers—sometimes to his grievous inconvenience. This is one instance, which a friend recalls, relating to an invitation which Dr. Robertson of Irvine—the same who, as a student, had visited him in Princes Street, Edinburgh, many years before—had given to De Quincey when in Glasgow to visit him in Ayrshire:—

"Without sending notice, the Opium-Eater arrived one day at the minister's lodgings when the minister was

from home. The landlady, an old maid, very particular in her habits, was shocked by the aspect of the visitor, and still more when he insisted on being shown in, that he might wait till Dr. R. returned next day. The old lady, who took him for a wandering vagrant, refused point-blank, and would not even let him cross the threshold to write a line to Dr. R. saying that he had called. She offered, however, to bring, or rather to allow the lass to bring, the minister's writing-desk to the doorstep, that De Quincey might pen his note there. When Dr. R. came home, it was to receive an indignant note from De Quincey, and to be horrified by the tale of how his illustrious visitor had been ignominiously turned away from his door."

His contributions to *Blackwood* and *Tait* were continued intermittently at all events up to 1849, the "Mail Coach" and the "Vision of Sudden Death" having appeared in the former in that year. During this Edinburgh period, too, he contributed at various times to *Blackwood* the following articles:—"On Milton," "On the Philosophy of Roman History," "Dinner, Real and Reputed," "The Opium Question," "Ricardo Made Easy," and others which, to the honour of the readers of *Maga* let it be said, they knew well how to appreciate.

To the Rev. Francis Jacox we are indebted for some genial glimpses of the Lasswade life, which we have much pleasure in inserting at this place:—

"It was on the 13th of July 1852 that I saw Mr. de Quincey for the first time; but the welcome he gave me at this first meeting was that of an old friend.

"He showed interest in learning from how early a date my interest in him had been cherished. It must have been in the first year of my teens that I became acquainted with his name, as a youthful prodigy in Greek, whose feats of scholarship were commemorated to a class of very different scholars, in Kensington Grammar School, by the head-master (in my time), the Rev. W. H. Whitworth. For particulars we were referred to the 'Confessions of an English Opium-Eater;' and that author's consummate mastery of the English language, especially

in the range of impassioned prose, was impressed upon us with admiring sympathy. It was not my good fortune to lay hands on the memorable volume until my school career was ending or ended; but when I did, there were mingled with the reading grateful memories of the man who commended its writer, and of the manner of the commendation. Between that time, however, and the period of my summer visit to Mavis Bush, Lasswade, my appetite for the author's *opera omnia* had been constantly growing by what it fed on; and when, a year or two before my becoming his guest, he had forwarded to me a list of his remembered and recognised contributions to periodical literature, with a view to collect and reprint them, or at least a selection from them, requesting me at the same time to make any additions to the list, if, from internal evidence, I could,—it was in my power to more than double the total. Many of the best and most characteristic of his anonymous essays he had clean forgotten, but there was no mistaking his sign-manual; and he was amusedly surprised at the voluminous expanse of his authorship.

“And now I was seated beside the author himself, a listener to the dulcet tones of that earnest but softly subdued voice, often tremulous with emphasis, and most musical when most melancholy. Gladly and gratefully would I have compounded for listening only. But Mr. de Quincey* was himself jealous of his rights as a listener too, even where, as in my case, those rights might have been absolutely renounced to our common advantage. Nothing could better manifest the innate courtesy, the even sensitive considerateness of the man, than his conduct in this respect. A master of the art of conversation, this he is on all sides known to have been; but I do not remember to have seen justice done to his surpassing

* “His name I write with a small *d* in the *de*, as he wrote it himself. He would not have wished it indexed among the D's, but the Q's. With all his sincere and pronounced regard for and admiration of Sara (Mrs. Henry Nelson) Coleridge, he would have entirely declined to countenance her uniform style of writing and printing him, all in one word, or at one fell swoop, ‘Mr. Dequincey.’”

attainments as a good listener. He was always for giving way; scrupulously on the watch for any, the slightest, token of interruption, objection, comment, assent, question, or answer, nothing could exceed the tone of unaffected deference with which he gave heed as well as ear to whatever his companion might have to say. Whether his talk was equal to that of Coleridge, or even was superior to it, may be a question that very few survivors now are competent to decide, or so much as to discuss. But if Madame de Staël was right in characterising S. T. C. as 'de monologue,' and so in implying his incapacity to listen patiently, his monopoly of the prerogative and privileges of harangue, then was Mr. de Quincey the flat opposite of that older 'old man eloquent' in this defect or effect, or, as Polonius might word it, effect defective.

"The same inborn and inbred spirit of benignant courtesy was perpetually cropping up in other ways—byways some of them, but leading to the same conclusion. His manner to his three daughters, for instance, was the perfection of chivalric respect as well as affection. Very noticeable was his unfailing habit of turning courteously to them and explaining, in his own choicely finished and graphic diction, any casually employed term from the 'dead languages,' which presumably might lie outside the pale of ladies' lore. When I chanced, at dinner that day, to recall the pronounced preference of his some time friend and almost neighbour, the self-styled Robert the Rhymer, who lived at the Lakes,—'But gooseberry-pie is best,'—at once the father turned to the daughters to remind them that Southey was here pleasantly parodying a line of Pindar's, which might furnish water-drinkers with a plea for all occasions, and Temperance Societies with a motto for all time.

"While sitting with him alone after dinner, he gave me an account of the lets and hindrances which impeded his design of republishing select volumes of his miscellaneous works—a design which was mainly strengthened and justified by the success of the American edition, published by Messrs Ticknor & Fields, eight volumes of which he showed me with obvious gratification, qualified

though it might be by his too conscious exclusion from actual editorial supervision. Grateful he nevertheless was to the enterprising Boston firm for collecting what he had hitherto lacked energy to collect. 'I must explain to you,' he said, 'that I have suffered for the last ten years and more from a most dreadful ailment, to an extent of which I never heard in any other instance'—a stagnation of blood in the legs, resulting in an effect upon the system of 'intense, intolerable torpor,' during which it was impossible to hold, or at any rate to guide, a pen; the torpor being, however, compatible with a 'frightful recurrence of long-ago imagery and veriest trifles of the past.' The tendency to sleep was irresistible, but the waking sensations made up a crisis of torture. Relief he found, but slight relief only, in walking from six to seven miles on an average daily. But then the weariness of having to walk so far for a relief so slight! So many literary schemes he had in contemplation—an elaborate history, and a historical novel among the number—some of which, if not all of which, he would fain finish before he died. Yet of these not one was so much as begun. Could he but begin at once! Referring to Wordsworth's happy immunity from distracting anxieties and carking cares, his lettered ease and tranquil surroundings, Mr. de Quincey exclaimed, 'Heavens! had I but ever had his robust strength, and healthy stomach, and sound nerves, with the same glorious freedom from all interruptions and embarrassment! . . . But, in point of fact, never have I written but against time, pressed by overbearing anxieties, and latterly more especially pressed down by physical suffering.' For the last six months he had reverted to the use of opium in small doses; but any mitigation of his malady it might afford, was avowedly counterbalanced by the specific suffering that it in turn inflicted. As to the suggested employment of an amanuensis, he replied that he never could dictate, and that his suffering would be increased by the sense of implicating another in the imbroglia of his nervous vacillations.

"Of current literature, and of men of letters past and present, he talked on that day, and on subsequent ones,

with freedom and vivacity. With interest he heard that Professor Wilson, ailing as he was, had been driven into Edinburgh expressly to record his vote for Macaulay ; and much he had to tell me of Christopher North and his ways, and of their joint association with the Lakes and with *Blackwood*. One quarrel he had with his old comrade-in-arms—for that magazine was politically a militant one—was his trick of spoiling a story in the telling. ‘For example, when I had lodgings over Waterloo Bridge, near the Surrey Theatre, in 1814, every night towards twelve o’clock a terrific din was caused in and around the play-house by the explosion scene in a piece that involved the burning of the Kremlin ; regularly, to a minute, that explosion awoke a contiguous cock ; this cock, in full crow, awoke another ; the second cock a third, and the definite three an indefinite chorus, or antiphony, of others ; which chorus, again, awoke and provoked a corresponding series of dogs ; and so on with other clamorous voices in succession—gradually swelling the aggregate of tumultuous forces. Now, when Professor Wilson, who found my story of the midnight din amusing, retold it in his own vigorous but inaccurate fashion, he spoilt the effect by making the uproar synchronous, instead of gradually successive.’ John Galt was another of the *Blackwood* staff discussed, and my host spoke with lively appreciation of the ‘Annals of the Parish,’ the peculiar interest of which he ascribed to the character of the narrator, as in Goldsmith’s ‘Vicar of Wakefield,’ where we are entertained by Dr. Primrose’s shrewd insight into his wife’s weak points, while he seems to have no inkling of his own absurdities in the polemics of deuterogamy. Of another contributor, the late R. P. Gillies, he spoke with wistful regret, feelingly deploring the straits and shifts to which that ill-starred scholar had been reduced. This, probably, may have been the friend who wrote from the precincts of Holyrood to Mr. de Quincey, to announce his enforced sojourn in that sanctuary, and to whom the reply came, in a style that savours of Charles Lamb, ‘I will be with you on Monday, D.V. ; but on Tuesday, D.V. or not.’ Of Sir William Hamilton much was said, and the strain then

heard was in a higher mood. But his friend and critic deemed him less subtle than Ferrier, though more comprehensive, and took exception to his 'unnecessary display of erudite quotations' all to back up a truism. Dr. Chalmers came in for a word of admiration, on the score of his broad spirit of liberality, and his tolerance of that German theology which, said Mr. de Quincey, 'I studied at my peril thirty or forty years ago.' Admiration was expressed, too, for the 'Christian Year.' Isaac Taylor's works had been read, but without much sense of a remunerative return. 'It is one of the afflictions of life' (said he, with a gentle smile), 'that one must read thousands of books only to discover that one need not have read them.'

"Of Talfourd, Mr. de Quincey spoke with evident regard, but thought his 'Ion' considerably overrated. He was emphatic in praise of Harriet Lee's 'The German's Tale,' as being almost unequalled in narrative skill, so artistic is the arrangement of the story, and so exquisite the delineation of Josephine's character. 'I had believed Miss Lee to have been dead long since, or I should certainly have called upon her in Bath, to offer her my personal respects and to express my gratification at her intellectual prowess.' As, to his own regret, he had assumed Miss Lee to be dead, equally so, in another case, he had assumed Mr. Gillman to be alive when the review of the 'Life of Coleridge' was contributed to *Blackwood*. 'Lockhart wrote to Wilson, "What does De Quincey mean by attacking in that sort of way a man in his grave?" Now this, when told me, was the first intimation I had of Mr. Gillman's death.'

"He owned to a decided disrelish for Miss Edgeworth's novels, assuming, as they seem to do, the existence of no higher virtues than prudence, discretion, and the like sober sisterhood. Both her and Lady Morgan he reckoned inferior in racy Irish portraiture to Maturin (the 'Wild Irish Boy'). Dickens he complained of as repeating himself in 'Bleak House,' then in course of publication; and a heavier cause of complaint lay in the popular author's dead set against the 'upper classes,'

as such, and his glorification at their expense of the idealised working-man. But Dickens he unhesitatingly preferred, because of his genial humanity, to Thackeray, whom I in vain tried to vindicate from the charge of a prevailing 'spirit of caustic cynicism.' Mr. de Quincey appeared to regard as simply a crotchety illusion or a blind partiality my remonstrances in favour of the author of 'Pendennis,' when for him I claimed the merit of supreme tenderness and benignity of heart, as well as sarcasm in its severest and irony in its most subtle forms. It has always been a puzzle to me how such a gracious nature, so delicately responsive to every fine touch, so acutely predisposed to the appeals of genuine pathos, should have missed the force and beauty of what is tender in Thackeray.

"I have a note of a sauntering to and fro with Mr. de Quincey in his garden on the forenoon of the 22nd, when more than once he was asked for alms by some passing mendicant, and each time with success. There was something at once deprecating and deferential in the tones with which he accosted the applicants severally, whether man or woman, as though he were in fear of hurting their feelings by putting them under an obligation. It was the same when, in my walks with him along the country roads, he was similarly beset. In every case he gave at once, and without inquiry or inspection. He had in former years been shocked by the vehemence with which Edward Irving, as they were walking together in London by night, upon one occasion repelled and reproached a street-beggar. He would probably have owned to being equally shocked by Archbishop Whately's sternly systematic repression of any weakness for such casual relief. But with Whately he would have had very little in common.

"During the days that I was his guest I could not but take note of the vicissitudes of temperament and spirits to which he was subject. For some time in the morning of each day he appeared to be grievously depressed and prostrate; the drowsy torpor of which he complained so keenly was then in fullest possession of him, and

futile were all endeavours to rouse or to interest him until that tyranny was overpast. Sometimes it extended further on into the day; and more than once, when there were visitors at his table, he appeared to be utterly baffled in every effort he made to shake off that oppressive lethargy, as certainly the most persistent and adventurous of those visitors were baffled in their endeavours to cheer him up and to draw him out. In fact, had I seen him, at this period of life, only in company, I should not have seen him at all. It was when alone with him that I learnt to know him. A walk in the fresh air would by degrees revive him; but nothing could I observe so effectual to refresh and reinvigorate him, no spell so potent to disperse his languor, as a cup of good coffee. I have seen it act upon him like a charm, bracing up his energies, clearing up his prospects, accelerating his speech as well as the march of his ideas, and inspiring him with a new fund of that eloquence which held the listener rapt, yet swayed him to and fro at its own sweet will. The eye that had been so heavy, so clouded, so filmy, so all but closed—the eye that had looked so void of life and significance, that had no speculation in it, nothing but a weary look of uttermost lassitude and dejection—now kindled with lambent fire, sparkled with generous animation, twinkled with quiet fun. The attenuated frame seemed to expand, and the face, if still pallid, revealed new capacities of spiritual expression, the most noteworthy a dreamy far-off look, as though holding communion with mysteries beyond our ken, with realities behind the veil.

“In his hours of languishing, when ‘drooping woful wan, like one forlorn,’ his utterance reminded me of Wordsworth’s lines:—

‘His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,
But each in solemn order followed each,
With something of a lofty utterance drest—
Choice words and measured phrase, above the reach
Of ordinary men; a stately speech.’

“Music he spoke of as a ‘necessity’ to his daily life. If ever again he visited London, it was his hope to frequent

the opera, though as to the theatres, he felt no kind of attraction in anything *they* could promise him. The idea of seeing 'Lear' on the stage, environed by the surroundings of mere pleasure-seekers and frivolous playgoers, seemed to him profanity outright. He adverted, however, with cordial admiration to the 'Antigone' of Miss Helen Faucit, of whom, and of her distinguished husband (Mr. Theodore Martin), he spoke in terms of personal regard. The latter he had recently met, I think he said at Mrs. Crowe's, one of the most intimate, at this time, of his literary friends in Edinburgh. To Mrs. Henry Siddons, too, as a graceful, aerial actress, he referred in terms of lively appreciation. Fond as he was of music, he was not often in the room while the two younger of his daughters played or sang during my stay; but he was a good listener, for all that, in his 'den' downstairs, and would comment on his favourites among their pieces when he rejoined us. Devout was his reverence for Beethoven, who alone, I used to think, was capable, among the great composers, of setting his dream fugues to music, or of interpreting their hidden mysteries and complex transitions in strains of some choral symphony. Mendelssohn he had not as yet come really to admire; not even the 'Songs without Words' seemed to speak home to his heart of hearts; and alike to 'May-bells' and 'Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast,' warbled by sweet sister voices, he could listen without a thrill. Bellini was so far a favourite with him that he often asked his daughters Florence and Emily to give him the well-worn 'Deh Conte;' nor would he tire of gems from the 'Don Giovanni,' or of Questo Semplice,' or of such time-tried strains as 'Time hath not thinned,' 'O lovely peace,' 'In chaste Susanna's praise,' 'Down the dark waters,' 'By limpid streams,' 'And will he not come again,' 'Birds blithely singing,' &c. He exulted in the fervour of expression and the musician-like touch and facility of execution with which his youngest daughter, still under professional instruction, rendered Beethoven's 'Sonata Pathetica,' Weber's 'Invitation,' and Pergolesi's 'Gloria in Excelsis.' When he had written to invite me to

visit him, he had promised me, if I liked such things, music and laughter in abundance, on the part of his three daughters. And well was the promise kept. Yet did he not promise me two things—music *and* laughter? In effect I found it to be all one, for the laughter itself was music.

“His eldest daughter’s delicate health was at this period a matter of grave anxiety to him ; and the doctor’s report of organic mischief in progress at the lungs overwhelmed him with solicitude and misgivings. She kept house for him, and he expressed to me, with the most charming *naïveté* and innocent candour, his supreme amazement at the economical tact with which, while exercising all the year round a quiet system of modest hospitality, she contrived to make both ends meet. Comfortable as she made his home, and happy as she and her two sisters made himself, he yet lamented piteously the inroads on his time caused by visitors. His only salvation, he said, for this chronic curse of distracting interruptions would entail the loss to his daughters of their only relaxation. He lamented, too, the smallness of his ‘den,’ overcrowded with books and papers. In this room he had left himself space only to slide along to his table through piles of volumes. His daughters told me this was the first house he had not built them out of, with these ever-accumulating books. Thrice in Westmoreland had such been their fate ; and they laughed at their own imprudence in leaving a bath in this room of his, which he instantly utilised past recovery as a receptacle for literary matter heaped up, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. They laughed, too, over his quaint trick of carrying off every scrap of paper he could lay his hands on, any old envelope or newspaper—not infrequently on the bland pretext of ‘burning it for you,’ in that fire of his which was never allowed to go out the whole year round, and which, in a little room so densely charged with combustible matter, was to them a source of some natural anxiety.

“It was on July 22nd that I repeated my visit, remaining with him at Mavis Bush until the 27th. Meanwhile,

he had been gratified by a visit from Mr. Fields of Boston, U.S.A., who, on leaving, had put into Miss de Quincey's hands a cheque for a part of the profits accruing from the sale of the American edition of his works—to be kept from her father's knowledge till he should have returned home from seeing his American guest to the coach. Miss Martineau had spent the afternoon with him the day before, and he spoke of her with real liking in his words and manner. If her size had impressed him, so had her quietness of demeanour, and, adopting Elia's phrase, he designated her the gentle giantess. She, on her part, had been pleasantly impressed by his voice, and had exclaimed to his eldest daughter apart, alluding to her own deafness, 'Oh, what a voice! so clear, so soft, so sweet; so delightful a contrast to the way people have of bawling to me.'

"On the 25th he hoped to have taken me to morning service at the Episcopal Chapel on the Duke of Buccleuch's grounds, Dalkeith, but was not well enough at the appointed hour, and I accompanied his three daughters to the chapel, driving through Bonnyrigg and Lowton, and coming within view of Cockpen Tower and of the Lammermoor Hills by the way. He talked of the service on our return, and showed how far his sympathies went with a moderately ornate ritual. Sound Church of England man as it was his great right and his pride to call himself, he avowed that his antagonism to Rome was mainly as a political system. On this Sunday afternoon he avowed the vehement hatred he had always cherished for the Judaic continuance of a Sabbath in the Judaic sense. Sabbath he hailed as a sublime word, but its exclusive beauty and significance were ruined, to his sense, by the 'base universal usage of it on the most trivial occasions.' For some Presbyterian ministers, notably Dr. Hanna, with whom he had agreeable relations in contributing to the *North British Review*, his regard was unaffectedly cordial. It must be remembered that a Scottish Broad Church party, such as could better have claimed his sympathies as a party, was hardly then in existence. The Norman Macleods and the Tul-

locks, as a power in the Kirk, were yet to come. He was curious to know more about Professor Maurice, who 'has been talked of to me as the greatest man in the Church of England,'—but who thus far had failed to impress him with a sense of real or definite power. All seemed so indefinite when looked closely into. What seemed firm ground gave way beneath your tread. As to Charles Kingsley and the 'Christian Socialists,' 'I am puzzled to know what in the world they would be at.' Mr. Gladstone's splendid powers had a charm for him: 'But what am I to think (1852) of his sympathies with a party abroad which at home would be identified with extreme democracy?' Not that extreme democracy in politics, any more than abstract atheism as such, was to Mr. de Quincey otherwise than philosophically interesting. One of the periodicals of the day which he seemed to read with great zest was *The Leader*, of the editor of which, Mr. G. H. Lewes, he spoke with inquiring eagerness. During our walk together into Edinburgh on the day of my finally quitting Mavis Bush, he expatiated with unprecedented animation on German theology of the advanced school, and freely recognised the 'enormity' of the difficulties which rigid orthodoxy had to confront. Passing on to speak of practical difficulties, he said, 'Frightfully perplexed I am, to this hour, as to what constitutes the so-called *appropriation* of the benefits of Christ's death. Never could I get any one to clear it up to me. Coleridge was utterly vague on the subject. He talked all about it and about it, but never talked it out, that I could discover. Often have I discussed the question with my mother, a clear-headed and thoughtful woman, devoted to the Evangelical system, and a devout supporter of *The Record*—which paper I honour, as, in the other extreme, but for the same reason, I do *The Leader*, for its candid and obvious earnestness in enforcing the views it has so sincerely at heart—but she would utterly fail to comprehend my difficulties. "My dear child," she would repeat, "you have simply to trust in the blood of Christ." "Very well," I would reply, "and I am quite willing; I

reverence Christ; but what does this trusting mean? How am I to know exactly what to do? Upon what specifically am I to take hold to support me when flesh and heart faileth, in the hour of death and at the day of judgment?" Countless different schemes there are to expound this doctrine of trust and of appropriation; but they remind me of the ancilia at Rome, the eleven copies of the sacred shield or palladium: to prevent the true one being stolen, the eleven were made exactly like it. So with the *true* doctrine of the atonement: it is lurking among the others that look like it, but who is to say *which* of them all it is?"

"After taking coffee with me that evening, Mr. de Quincey surpassed himself in copious eloquence and vivid variety of discourse, from grave to gay, from lively to severe. He talked of the history he proposed to write—a 'philosophical history of England, perhaps up to the period when Macaulay begins.' The novel he had in contemplation was to be about two prisoners in Austria, in the time of Maria Theresa. He said of his translated novel, 'Walladmor,' that it arose out of a hasty review of the German original inserted in the *London Magazine*. Taylor & Hessey, being struck with the extracts as he had Englished them, commissioned him to translate the complete work. The complete work, he said, turned out to be complete trash; but he did his best, partly recast the story, and gave more point to the conversations. It found a few admirers, among whom it was gratifying to him to reckon Dora Wordsworth (Mrs. Quillinan).

"As I walked with him along Princes Street to the Mound on his way home, I noticed the nervous solicitude with which he refrained from any gesture while passing a cabstand that might seem to warrant any driver in concluding himself summoned and engaged. Some unhappy experience of a mistake of this kind may have been the secret of his disquiet, for evidently he entertained a dread of the 'overbearing brutality of these men.' He spoke of his short-sightedness, which at Oxford had been so marked, that he was rumoured to

be a bit of a Jacobin because he failed to 'cap' the Master of his college (Worcester) when he met him, only from sheer inability to recognise him by sight. We paused to look at the display of French and German books in Seton's window, and he would willingly have lingered there till sunset, glancing from author to author, with a word for (or against) each. Seeing in Bell & Bradfute's window a copy of Hawthorne's 'Mosses,' about which I had been talking to his daughters, I went in to buy it, he readily undertaking the light portorage; and it led him to talk of Hawthorne's genius, and to mention a recent visit of Emerson's,—to neither of whom could he accord quite the degree of admiration claimed for them by the more thoroughgoing of their respective admirers.* Our way lay through George Square to the Meadows, and at the end of 'Lovers' Walk' he insisted on my not incurring the fatigue of accompanying him farther. It was between eight and nine on that lovely July evening that I took leave—my last leave—of the man to whom I owed so much. At the very moment of parting, all seemed to me like a dream: that we had ever met, that we were now parting. Could it all be but the baseless fabric of a vision, and was this the break-up, to leave not a rack behind?

'The old man still stood talking by my side;
But now his voice to me was like a stream
Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide;
And the whole body of the man did seem
Like one whom I had met with in a dream.'

"The parting was over, and he went on his way. Lingered, I watched that receding figure, as it dimmed in the distance. The last I saw of him, he had opened Hawthorne's book, and went along reading as he walked. In that attitude I lost sight of him. He went on his way, and I saw him no more. FRANCIS JACOX."

In the autumn of 1852 we find Miss Mitford thus writing to Mrs. Hoare, and bringing into momentary con-

* Later than this, Mr. de Quincey read the "Scarlet Letter" and other works of Hawthorne with great access of admiration.
—ED.

junction two great names in literature which suggest more of a common interest than many others:—

“Did I tell you that Mr. Fields expects to bring Mr. Hawthorne to England with him in the spring? And did I also say that the last act of my excellent friend, before leaving England, was to carry to Mr. de Quincey, in Scotland, the author's profits of the seven volumes of his collected works, which he (Mr. Fields) had collected with so much care and pains, and edited himself? This piece of generosity, unprecedented in any publisher, English or American, gave great pleasure to the ‘Opium-Eater,’ whom Mr. Fields describes as the most courtly gentleman that he has seen in *Europé*.”

Again, in the winter of 1853, Miss Mitford writes to Miss Goldsmid:—

“Two or three of my friends have visited Mr. de Quincey at Lasswade, where he now lives (did Miss Caroline see him with poor Dr. Mainzer?); and they all say it is the strangest mixture,—of an appearance so neglected that he looks like an old beggar, of manners so perfect that they would do honour to a prince, and of conversation unapproached for brilliancy. He confessed to one of my friends, who saw him on a bad day, that he could only quiet his nerves by opium—so that he has not left it off. His daughter Margaret, my correspondent, whose letters are as charming as her father's books, is going to be married to a young Scotchman who has bought land in Tipperary,—a venture; but a genial young couple may, I think, find and make friends among the Irish.”

Another visitor to Lasswade at this time, to whom Mr. Jacox has just referred, was Miss Martineau, who made herself very friendly with the whole circle, and had her ear-trumpet in ready requisition to hear, and sometimes perhaps to fancy that she heard more than she really did; but, at all events, in after-days to turn the experience then gained to account in ways that will remain with a stinging effect in the minds of all who take any interest in the history of De Quincey or of his writings.

One of the warmest friends of De Quincey's Edinburgh life was Mrs. Crowe, whose little literary gatherings were

as select as they were successful. It was at her house that De Quincey made the acquaintance of Professor Nichol, and of the famous chemist, Dr. Samuel Brown, and there also that he first met Emerson, whom, with Dr. S. Brown, he entertained at Lasswade; admiring much in Emerson, as was inevitable, but not finding himself able fully to enjoy his lectures from the trace of the American nasal sing-song in his speech. Miss de Quincey recalls the circumstance of Mrs. Crowe being accompanied to one of his lectures by her father and a friend of his; and both gentlemen—one on each side of her—in listening to Emerson exhibited such tendencies to drowsiness that Mrs. Crowe was much troubled by the necessity of repeated nudgings lest the lecturer should see how her friends inclined to appreciate his efforts.

On one occasion, when the day fixed for one of her gatherings turned out to be execrable—wind and rain—and she had begun to fear that no one at all would come, she had gone to the door to see if any one were really coming, with a rough wide mantle thrown round her, and with an access of delight perceived De Quincey toiling through the rain with his loose cloak waving in the wind. She was made so happy by the sight, that on his approach she threw herself into his arms at the door, uttering, “You dear good man!” much to the surprise and amusement of those who chanced to be passing or looking out of windows near by.

Mrs. Crowe was one of the few ladies—perhaps the only lady outside his own family—with whom De Quincey so far got rid of his formality of Mrs. or Miss as to speak of her and to her uniformly by her Christian name of Catherine.

Of the many letters to De Quincey from Mrs. Crowe during the long period of their friendship all that remains is the following, which must belong to the earlier time. It is interesting for its references to her tragedy, and to Dr. Samuel Brown, of whom her opinion was naturally very high:—

“MY DEAR SIR,—I was very much gratified by your kind acceptance of my invitation for to-morrow evening—pray, keep the promise of your seal, and do not forget it. I shall have

nobody to meet you but Dr. Brown. Two strangers are enough for one invalid.

"I am glad you like my Tragedy; for I am rather proud of it, though the world has never taken any notice of it. As for my novels which it lauds and patronises, I have an entire contempt for them.

"With respect to Dr. Samuel Brown, it gives me great pleasure to be the means of making you acquainted with each other. I think you will find him a very remarkable man: the world, which is slow to discover its *really* great men, will acknowledge him to be so when he makes fully known his achievements in chemistry, which prudential reasons at present induce him to withhold. Till to-morrow evening I remain,—Yours truly,

C. CROWE.

"2 DARNAWAY ST., *Wednesday.*"

Mrs. Crowe was therefore like Thomas Hood, "the lively Hood for a livelihood," and so many more, prouder of what the world did not recognise and care for than of what it did—a more common experience of authors than might be supposed.

Dr. Shadworth Hodgson—a relative of the De Quincey family, and, by his turn of mind and his studies, well entitled to speak of De Quincey's claims as a thinker and political economist, has, since the first edition of this memoir appeared, done not a little to justify De Quincey's title to a high place as an acute critic and speculative thinker, as well as a brilliant writer and prose poet. He insists that De Quincey had formulated principles in political economy for which others had got credit, and had luminously exhibited distinctions which even John Stuart Mill had failed clearly to seize and illustrate, as well as rebutted some of the assertions of Dr. Hutchison Stirling and others with respect to certain metaphysical points and his views of German writers on these subjects. But Dr. Hodgson's picture of the man and his analysis of his genius is what most concerns a biographer reviewing the ground he had traversed in former times.* Dr. Hodgson says:—

* "Outcast Essays." By Shadworth H. Hodgson, Hon. LL.D., Edinburgh. First and second chapters: The Genius of De Quincey, and De Quincey as a Political Economist. Longmans & Co.

"For my own part, I may say that I needed not to wait for Mr. Page's book to form a truer estimate of De Quincey's character than the current legends afforded. Not only as a relative of the family was I acquainted with the outlines of his life, but it was my privilege in summer of 1853 to pass several days as a guest under his roof. His writings—those that I was then acquainted with—had been to me a source of the most valuable instruction; not of delight only, but of instruction and insight into regions which would else have remained closed to me. . . . He was, besides, the very soul of courtesy in conversation, studious not only to listen, but respond to every remark, and make it bear its full fruit. I remember particularly his jubilant applause when an afternoon visitor reported a supposed epitaph on a great talker, beginning *Hic tacet*. His fancy was captivated by the effect which the change of a single letter produced, the sudden heightening of the garrulousness, which nothing but death could check, making it leap, as it were, to infinity, and at the same moment contrasting it, with an infinite silence.

"But, after all, his own quiet flow of talk was the greatest charm. *Philomelus* was the name which afterwards in my own mind I gave him. For no description that I have read of him seems to me to surpass in truth and vividness the lines in which Thomson describes the bard *Philomelus* in the second canto of the 'Castle of Indolence':—

'A little druid wight,
Of withered aspect; but his eye was keen,
With sweetness mixed; in russet brown bedight,
.
.
.
He crept along, unpromising of mien,
Gross he who judges so. His soul was fair.
Bright as the children of yon azure sheen.'

"There you have De Quincey; at least in his later days. And few as are the touches, the portrait which they compose is that of a living and breathing mortal."

But if Dr. Hodgson, as a relative of the De Quincey family, might by some be supposed to be favourably pre-

judiced, he is not the first to speak highly of De Quincey's power as a logician and political economist. Here is the verdict of Archdeacon Hare :—

“So deplorable was the dearth of thought in England after the death of Burke, that, while Godwin's deeper fallacies were scarcely touched by his opponents, they buoyed themselves up with the notion that he had been overthrown by the bulkiest instance of an *ignoratio elenchi* in the whole history of pseudo-philosophy—the ‘Essay on Population ;’ a work which may have merits in other respects, but which, with reference to its primary object, the refutation of Condorcet and Godwin, is utterly impotent, all its arguments proceeding on a hypothesis totally different from that which it undertakes to impugn, as has been convincingly shown by the great logician of our times in one of the ‘Notes from the Pocket-book of an English Opium-Eater.’”*

In the year 1849 a new and fruitful literary connection had been opened up. As it led to the issue of the “Collected Writings”—an enterprise in the circumstances as precarious as it was praiseworthy—we are glad to be able to give an account of it in the words of Mr. James Hogg himself, in another chapter.

* “Guesses at Truth,” p. 333, edition of 1871.



CHAPTER XXVI.

MR HOGG'S REMINISCENCES.

IT was in the autumn of the year 1849 that I first saw Thomas de Quincey. At that period, much of my time was taken up in connection with *Hogg's Instructor*, and owing to an accident that had occurred in our printing-office, we had partially betaken ourselves to temporary and somewhat out-of-the-way premises at Canonmills, in the vicinity of Edinburgh. As I was attending to some matters in this office, I was informed that a gentleman urgently wished to see me. Going down, I was confronted by a noticeably small figure, attired in a capacious garment which was much too large, and which served the purpose of both undercoat and overcoat. Although I was well acquainted with the fame and writings of Thomas de Quincey, and had read accounts of his personal appearance, the figure now before me failed to realise the idea I had formed of the English Opium-Eater. It was some time before the extreme refinement of the face was noticed—not, indeed, till the voice, gentle, clear, and silvery, began to be heard; when the eye ceased to be diverted by a certain oddity in the general appearance, and was attracted by the brow, which, from its prominence, gave an aspect of almost childlike smallness to the under face, and by the eyes, which combined a singular power of

quiet scrutiny with a sort of dreamy softness that suggested something of weariness.

With an air of quiet good breeding, he told me who he was, and the object of his visit, which was to offer me an article for the *Instructor*. He expressed his satisfaction at the manner in which that work had been conducted ; said he was pleased with its non-political and non-sectarian character ; and, if there was a vacancy on the staff, he would like to become an occasional contributor.

I was much pleased at the offer of the services of so distinguished a writer. The contribution which he had brought with him was forthwith drawn from the capacious inner pocket of his coat ; but, before being handed to me, I was both surprised and amused at a small hand-brush being drawn from the same receptacle, and the manuscript carefully brushed before it was handed to me. This operation was one which I afterwards found that he invariably performed. The contribution was then and there accepted.

I remember asking him on this occasion how he meant to return to Lasswade. He replied, "I shall, as usual, walk ;—from this point it is only about ten miles ; it is now only six o'clock, and I shall reach home about nine." This will show that on this occasion he must have walked twenty miles in his journey from Lasswade and back.

One visit led to another, and before long the connection became so intimate, that I either saw him or heard from him at short intervals—an intimacy which, I am glad to say, consolidated as time went on, and remained unbroken till the last hour.

The project of the "Collected Works" was talked of in the earlier stages of our acquaintance, and I remember well the remarks which reached me from various quarters when I announced the series.* It was said that I was

* It was well known, and had been publicly intimated in the *Eclectic Review*, that no collection of his works revised by himself would ever appear, as the author, owing to age and ill health, had declined to accede to the request of several publishers that he should prepare such a collection.—ED.

engaging in an undertaking which I would never be able to complete—that others had tried it and failed, and that I would succeed no better than they had done. I might, perhaps, get a volume printed, but that would be all. But I persevered, and, by dint of patience and a way of humouring him, I succeeded. I soon discovered, however, that it was almost impossible to overrate difficulties—his whole constitution and habit of mind were averse from sustained and continuous work of the kind. He was constantly being caught with new plans, and when I was desirous of pushing on the publication of the works, would entertain me with the most ingenious devices and speculations—sometimes alighting on really practical needs, the supplying of which would have done something towards a fortune. I soon found out that it was of no use to show impatience—that the causes of delay were for the most part beyond his control; that he did not lack the will to make efforts, but the power, and that the power was most amenable when he was left unharassed. A gentle reminder, an indirect suggestion, rather than an expression of one's disappointment, was the most efficient spur to his will; for he was sympathetic and appreciative of gentleness beyond all men I have ever known.*

In 1840 he had leased a pretty little cottage called Mavis Bush, near Lasswade, situated on the brow of one of the declivities leading to the river Esk, where he lived with his daughters in quiet and comfort. Now that he was engaged on a work which required his presence more frequently in Edinburgh, he began to discover manifold grievances, real or imaginary, in living at such a distance from the press. For a time he persevered in walking in and out—the double journey being about fourteen miles. He was never inclined to favour coaches, finding himself thrown into companionships he did not relish.† He so

* The notes from Mr. de Quincey's own hand which appear in the succeeding chapter will serve to show how the work progressed. These notes have been culled from many others of a similar character.

† In that most exquisite and humorous piece of criticism on

often arrived at my place of business late in the afternoon, that it would almost seem as if he preferred walking home from Edinburgh to Lasswade after dark—an impression confirmed by an amusing provision which he hit upon for illumination at a somewhat perilous stage in the journey. The river Esk, at certain parts of its course, runs between somewhat steep and craggy embankments. On the route he preferred to take there was a small footbridge not very far from his own house, which was so narrow that there was some risk in attempting to cross it in the darkness. He therefore procured a small lantern, which he lit before leaving Edinburgh, and carried in his pocket. But, to his utter consternation, several times running it went out, as if by some fatality, just as he approached the fragile footbridge. He, therefore, abandoned the lantern in some disappointment. He has himself given an illustration of the great distance practically between Lasswade and Edinburgh in a playful introduction to one of his essays, published in 1852. But playful as it is, the miseries to which he was subjected were real enough.

This fancied delay in communication led to his taking lodgings in Edinburgh, where he would be near to the press. I shall not soon forget the aspect which his rooms came to wear before they had been long occupied by him. Boxes of papers filled the corners, and papers lay scattered on every available bit of flat surface; books

Landor, titled "*Milton versus Southey and Landor*," he thus, in throwing some ridicule on "Over-colonisation" as the lesson of "Gebir," interjects what is in reality an autobiographic touch:—"I, indeed, knew a case, but Dalica did *not*, of over-colonisation. It was the case, which even yet occurs on out-of-the-way roads, where a man unjustly big mounts into the inside of a stage-coach already sufficiently crowded. In streets and squares, where men could give him a wide berth, they had tolerated the iniquity of his person; but now, in a chamber so confined, the length and breadth of his wickedness shines revealed to every eye. And if the coach should upset, which it would not be the less likely to do for having *him* on board, somebody or other (perhaps myself) must lie beneath this monster, like Enceladus under Mount Etna, calling upon Jove to come quickly with a thunderbolt, and destroy both man and mountain, both *sucubus* and *incubus*, if no other relief offered."—ED.

and magazines piled indiscriminately tier on tier against the wall from the floor; his very table so littered as scarcely to allow him a corner to write upon—the available space for this and other purposes being no bigger than a sheet of letter-paper. Soon obstacles and delays arose here as at Lasswade, and all the old process of humouring and gentle hastening were again found necessary. His incapacity to stick to work was increased by his nervous dread of putting others to inconvenience, or causing them loss or suffering. Though he had little of the passion for fine books which afflicts some scholars, he was pursued by a Chinese-like reverence for written or printed paper. Newspapers and magazines, which reached him from all parts of the world, he preserved with religious care; even his MSS. which had been printed he preserved; and his habit of making notes on loose slips of paper in the course of his reading, and depositing them among the papers, rendered those heaps to be valuable in his eyes, though they were so rather as containing thin veins of gold than as being throughout golden. But only he himself could have told what was valuable, as the notes were not seldom wholly unintelligible to any one else; and the laborious process of sorting was often deferred, while he clung to his gatherings almost with childlike pertinacity. Nay, he was wont to drag such heaps from place to place with him, whereby arose some of the oddest accidents perhaps on record.

On one occasion, when he was about to pay a visit to Professor Lushington in Glasgow, he resolved he would do a great deal of work while enjoying the quiet and comfort of his esteemed friend's home. Accordingly, he had two tea-chests filled with such papers, and these he took with him. On reaching Glasgow, he placed the chests under the care of a porter to convey to his destination; he, apparently, proceeding with the porter to guard them. Having gone so far, the porter found that his load was heavier than he had bargained for; and either he or De Quincey suggested that it would be well to leave the boxes in some place near at hand. A bookseller's shop was espied not far off, and to that the two betook

themselves. The bookseller agreed to allow the two chests house-room for a short time, and they were accordingly left with him. But De Quincey had omitted to note the name, the number of the shop, or even the name of the street, and was never able to find the place. On his return to Edinburgh he mourned over the irreparable loss of his valuable papers; and after a considerable time, when he had quite given them up as lost for ever, I wrote to a friend in Glasgow detailing the circumstances, and asking whether he would take the trouble to send round to the booksellers', inquiring if any such boxes had been left with either of them. To my astonishment, my friend succeeded in ferreting out the precious packages; and De Quincey's look of pleased surprise may be imagined when I directed his attention to them in my office as I asked, "Do you know these boxes?" He stood for a moment as if petrified, and unable to say anything; and on my asking him what should be done with them, he said, "Send them to Lothian Street," where probably they lay unopened for another period as long, and when opened at last, were not found to contain such valuables as he had fancied.

I remember another occasion, when I accompanied him to have his daguerreotype taken. The studio of the daguerreotype artist was in Princes Street; and, returning by way of the High Street, we were overtaken by a severe thunderstorm, which drove us into Paxton's Royal Exchange Hotel for shelter. While there having a basin of soup, the waiter, after closely scrutinising my companion, gently touched him on the arm, and said, "I think, sir, I have a bundle of papers which you left here some time ago." A parcel was accordingly produced, which, sure enough, proved to be papers belonging to De Quincey. It then turned out that my friend had slept at this hotel some twelve months before, and on that occasion had confided these papers to the waiter, asking him to keep them till he called for them.

Apropos of this same daguerreotype, an engraving from which appeared in *Hogg's Instructor*, I received from De Quincey the following humorous letter, which was

printed in the *Instructor* for March 1851, but is, I think, in so rich and characteristic a vein as to deserve insertion here:—

“*To the Editor of ‘Hogg’s Instructor.’*”

“September 21, 1850.

“MY DEAR SIR,—I am much obliged to you for communicating to us (that is, to my daughters and myself) the engraved portrait, enlarged from the daguerreotype original. The engraver, at least, seems to have done his part ably. As to one of the earlier artists concerned—viz., the sun of July—I suppose it is not allowable to complain of him, else my daughters are inclined to upbraid him with having made the mouth too long. But, of old, it was held audacity to suspect the sun’s veracity:—‘Solem quis discere falsum audeat!’ And I remember that, half a century ago, the *Sun* newspaper, in London, used to fight under sanction of that motto. But it was at length discovered by the learned, that *Sun junior*, viz., the newspaper, *did* sometimes indulge in fibbing. The ancient prejudice about the solar truth broke down, therefore, in that instance; and who knows but sun *senior* may be detected, now that our optical glasses are so much improved, in similar practices? in which case he may have only been ‘keeping his hand in’ when operating upon that one feature of the mouth. The rest of the portrait, we all agree, does credit to his talents, showing that he is still wide awake, and not at all the superannuated old artist that some speculators in philosophy had dreamed of his becoming.

“As an accompaniment to the portrait, your wish is that I should furnish a few brief chronological memoranda of my own life. *That* would be hard for me to do, and, when done, might not be very interesting for others to read. Nothing makes such dreary and monotonous reading as the old hackneyed roll-call, chronologically arrayed, of inevitable facts in a man’s life. One is so certain of the man’s having been born, and also of his having died, that it is dismal to be under the necessity of reading it.

That the man began by being a boy—that he went to school—and that by intense application to his studies, ‘which he took to be *his* portion in this life,’ he rose to distinction as a robber of orchards, seems so probable, upon the whole, that I am willing to accept it as a postulate. That he married—that, in fulness of time, he was hanged, or (being a humble, unambitious man) that he was content with deserving it—these little circumstances are so naturally to be looked for, as sown broadcast up and down the great fields of biography, that any one life becomes, in this respect, but the echo of thousands. Chronologic successions of events and dates, such as these, which, belonging to the race, illustrate nothing in the individual, are as wearisome as they are useless.

“A better plan will be to detach some single chapter from the experiences of childhood, which is likely to offer at least this kind of value—either that it will record some of the deep impressions under which my childish sensibilities expanded, and the ideas which at that time brooded continually over my mind, or else will expose the traits of character that slumbered in those around me. This plan will have the advantage of not being liable to the suspicion of vanity or egotism; for I beg the reader to understand distinctly, that I do not offer this sketch as deriving any part of what interest it may have from myself, as the person concerned in it. If the particular experience selected is really interesting, in virtue of its own circumstances, then it matters not to *whom* it happened. Suppose that a man should record a perilous journey, it will be no fair inference that he records it as a journey performed by himself. Most sincerely he may be able to say that he records it not for that relation to himself, but *in spite* of that relation. The incidents, being absolutely independent, in their power to amuse, of all personal reference, must be equally interesting [he will say] whether they occurred to A. or to B. That is *my* case. Let the reader abstract from *me* as a person that which by accident, or in some partial sense, may have been previously known to himself.

Let him read the sketch as belonging to one who wishes to be profoundly anonymous. I offer it, not as owing anything to its connection with a particular individual, but as likely to be amusing separately for itself; and if I make any mistake in *that*, it is not a mistake of vanity exaggerating the consequence of what relates to my own childhood, but a simple mistake of the judgment as to the power of amusement that may attach to a particular succession of reminiscences.

"Excuse the imperfect development which in some places of the sketch may have been given to my meaning. I suffer from a most afflicting derangement of the nervous system, which at times makes it difficult for me to write at all, and always makes me impatient, in a degree not easily understood, of recasting what may seem insufficiently or even incoherently expressed.— Believe me, ever yours,

THOMAS DE QUINCEY."

This was followed by the first portion of what now appears in the "Collected Works," under the title of "Autobiographic Sketches." After the second paper in the series appeared, an interval of eight months elapsed ere the succeeding portion was obtained; and as the continuation was looked forward to with much interest by the readers of the *Instructor*, numerous letters on the subject reached me. Some of these I gave to Mr. de Quincey, and this led to the following characteristic introduction which preceded the third section (*Hogg's Instructor*, January 1852):—

"I understand that several readers of my 'Sketch from Childhood' (published heretofore in this journal) have lodged complaints against me for not having pursued it to what they can regard as a satisfactory close. Some may have done this in a gentle tone, as against an irclaimable procrastinator, amiably inclined perhaps to penitence, though constitutionally incapable of amendment; but others more clamorously, as against one faithless to his engagements, and deliberately a defaulter. Themselves they regard in the light of creditors, and me as a slippery debtor, who, having been permitted to

pay his debts by instalments—three, suppose, or four—has paid two, and then absconded in order to evade the rest. Certainly to this extent I go along with them myself, that in all cases of a tale or story moving through the regular stages of a plot, the writer, by the act of publishing the introductory parts, pledges himself to unweave the whole tissue to the last. The knot that he has tied, though it should prove a very Gordian-knot, he is bound to untie. And if he fails to do so, I doubt whether a reader has not a right of action against him for having wantonly irritated a curiosity that was never meant to be gratified—for having trifled with his feelings—and, possibly, for having distressed and perplexed his moral sense ; as, for instance, by entangling the hero and heroine (two young people that can be thoroughly recommended for virtue) in an Irish bog of misfortunes, and there leaving them to their fate—the gentleman up to his shoulders, and the poor lady, therefore, in all probability, up to her lips. But in a case like the present, where the whole is offered as a *sketch*, an action would not lie. A sketch, by its very name, is understood to be a fragmentary thing : it is a *torso*, which may want the head, or the feet, or the arms, and still remain a marketable piece of sculpture. In buying a horse, you may look into his mouth, but not in buying a *torso*, for, if all his teeth have been gone for ten centuries, which would certainly operate in the way of discount upon the price of a horse, very possibly the loss would be urged as a good ground for an *extra* premium upon the *torso*. Besides, it is hard to see how any proper *end* could be devised for a paper of this nature, reciting a few incidents, sad and gay, from the records of a half-forgotten childhood, unless by putting the child to death ; for which *dénouement*, unhappily, there was no solid historical foundation.

“Right or wrong, however, my accusers are entitled to my gratitude ; since in the very fact of their anger is involved a compliment. By proclaiming their indignation against the procrastinating or absconding sketcher, they proclaim their interest in the sketch ;

and, therefore, if any fierce Peter Peebles should hang upon my skirts, hauling me back to work, and denouncing me to the world as a fugitive from my public duties, I shall not feel myself called upon to contradict him. As often as he nails me with the charge of being a skulker from work *in meditatione fugæ*, I shall turn round and nail him with the charge of harbouring an intense admiration for me, and putting a most hyperbolical value upon my services; or else why should he give himself so much trouble, after so many months are gone by, in pursuing and recapturing me? On this principle, I shall proceed with others who may have joined the cry of the accusers, obediently submitting to their pleasure, doing my best, therefore, to supply a conclusion which in my own eyes had not seemed absolutely required, and content to bear the utmost severity of their censure as applied to myself the workman, in consideration of the approbation which that censure carries with it by implication to the work itself."

I have mentioned the cases of the tea-chests and the parcel of papers to illustrate his absent-mindedness and simplicity, which, however, sometimes led to his being sadly imposed upon and subjected to great annoyance. I know of one instance, in which people who had become possessed of papers of his, and who got money from him on delivering them, came professing to have found more papers of great value, and who, after getting the sum demanded, left a worthless packet, mostly of straw neatly done up in many folds of paper! Indeed, it may be said that, from his peculiar habits of gathering, and his incapacity to make practical arrangements, he left papers and packages of a somewhat mixed nature behind him in most places where he had stayed; which circumstance caused him to be sought out and followed in after-years by those who probably would not else have borne him so long in mind. I believe that during these last years I was on such a footing of intimacy with him that I heard something of every landlady he had ever lived with in Edinburgh. Putting aside the case of Miss M——, who presented an exorbitant claim for

ordinary rent when she had merely given house-room for a period of time to some papers, there were only three instances of landladies following him; and it may not be out of place to mention them here. There was, first, Miss —, with whom he had lodged for some time. When she heard that the "Collected Works" were being published, she came to me, and begged me to receive some papers which she had carefully kept for several years. She always believed that they were of great value, as De Quincey had told her, and asked me to relieve her of all responsibility respecting them. I accordingly did so; and at the first opportunity restored them to Mr. de Quincey. But no claim whatever was put forward by Miss —, simply a desire to deliver into the proper hands what she understood was valuable. De Quincey, I learned, had, however, left the house under some hallucination as to indebtedness to her.

The next case was that of Mrs. —, from whom De Quincey had rooms for a considerable period, though I know that on one occasion he went out, as though for his customary walk, but did not return at his usual time. The truth is, he had gone to see a friend, under whose roof he stayed for some months; but, returning, he walked into the rooms as though he had only left them that morning. In this instance, also, he left papers behind him; and, as in the former case, Mrs. — came to me and requested me to take charge of them, which I did.

These were instances of people of good principle and good feeling. But there was one case of persons with whom De Quincey had come into contact as a lodger who did not act in the same way. Here again he left papers behind him; but in this instance the opportunity was seized to make something by them. Knowing the value—whether real or imaginary—that De Quincey always attached to his papers (and indeed sometimes it would have been difficult, as I have already said, for himself to tell their value), Mrs. —, with the aid of her family, resorted to various devices to harass and extort money from him. I will not disguise that it was to this family I referred when I spoke above of the

"bogus" packets on which they endeavoured to raise money. They never had and never made a claim for arrears; but pleaded poverty, and by promising to bring valuable papers they over and over got small sums of money. But only sometimes did the promised papers come. Of the characters of these people and their transactions I have good reason to know; for, after having been again and again victimised by them in this way, De Quincey was at last compelled to refuse to see them any more, and asked me, as a great favour, to take them in hand, and to see whether they really had anything of value, as he acknowledged he was unequal to deal with them. This I willingly agreed to do, and luckily I still have in my possession private documents that would suffice to show not only that they had no claim whatever upon him, but that they added to their pretence of holding valuable papers appeals to his charitable sympathies. In fact, they went so far as to try to touch his feelings by feigning death in the family, the more readily to get advances from him on the promise of the delivery of papers. In the last resort, I arranged with De Quincey to pay a small sum, if I was satisfied that the remaining papers they had were of such value as was represented, and that they would be delivered to me as promised. I feel it necessary, in corroboration of these statements, to produce here a letter which I would not otherwise have felt at liberty to print, and do so now only under a sense of justice to the memory of De Quincey:—

"EDINBURGH, 2nd Sept. 1854.

"MR. DE QUINCEY, SIR,—In accordance with your request, I have made out the enclosed items, money for which I would want for my mother's funeral. She is to be buried to-morrow at four o'clock, and would like things settled as early as possible to-day. All the responsibility rests with me."

This letter was immediately forwarded to me (marked "to be returned," which words were struck out, and "please to keep this" inserted in their stead) with the following comment:—

“MY DEAR SIR,—I am pretty sure that Mr. —— will call on you in consequence of my failure to call on *him* at two o'clock. Would you have been so kind in that case as to advance him the additional £1, which you gave him reason to expect, *he pledging his word to bring the remaining papers on Monday.** At the same time, would you *also* give him the enclosed sum of 25 shillings. And in any extreme case, perhaps, you would use your own discretion as to advancing him a trifle more, which, of course, I will make good.”

Considering the footing on which I stood with Mr. de Quincey during the last ten years of his life,—being admitted to him at all hours and in all moods, “grave and gay,” I believe I had opportunities of knowing more about his affairs than any one, excepting his own family,—it is quite impossible, from what I have related, that if there had been a “tracking from lodging to lodging,” and persistent purloining of papers on the plea of arrears of rent, as has been recently represented, I should not have heard of it.

During the time that he lived in Lothian Street, I can say that he was attended to by his landlady and her sister—Mrs. Wilson and Miss Stark, with whom he had lodged at a former period—in such a manner as to have called forth from him the utmost respect, consideration, and sympathy. In proof of this I need only mention that, during his last illness, Miss Stark was the attendant who is so touchingly spoken of by Dr. Warburton Begbie in his account of the last days, which appears at the end of this volume.

Suffering he could not see without making some effort to relieve it—if he had money there was no calculation of results (in this certainly failing to illustrate some of his ideas in political economy). In spite of his shrewd discernment of character, I am not sure that he was not victimised by those who can whine—at all events, he was utterly indifferent to money, and was not seldom himself in straits from his unstinted, if not reckless, liberality. I

* The italics here are mine.—J. H.

mention these matters as I cannot well otherwise explain one very beautiful trait in his character as exhibited in my contact with him. If he came to me with an unfinished paper—which he often did—it was my habit to give him the money he wished for it, and patiently to wait his own time for the remainder. His utter honour and honesty were seen in this, that these papers were, with a solitary exception, ultimately finished and given to me. And the underlying sense of his own helplessness in practical matters was sometimes brought out with a peculiar mixture of the pathetic and the humorous. He did not care for receiving large sums of money at once—preferring it in small sums as he required them; and he was positively put about by having anything to do with cheques. On one occasion, when I had given him a cheque for some £30, to balance his account to a particular date, he put the cheque into one or other of his pockets and went away. In a short time he returned, in great concern, saying that he must have dropped it, vigorously re-performing the labour of search as he spoke, by turning his pockets inside out. I said to him, “It doesn’t matter, I shall at once send over to the bank and stop payment”—on which assurance he looked greatly relieved, and went away. But in a few minutes he returned again to tell me that, after all, he had found it at the bottom of that capacious side-pocket of his coat already referred to; and he urged me to take back the cheque, and give him a portion of the sum in cash—the remainder to be paid to him as he required it.

It has been said that he had no interest in the passing topics of the day. No greater mistake than this has ever been committed in the description of the character of Thomas de Quincey. It is true that he took little or no interest in purely political party squabbles; and it may sound surprising to say that a man who lived almost the life of a recluse, and who showed in many practical matters so much of a childlike simplicity and incapacity, should take not only a lively interest in great questions, but speak of them with deep enthusiasm, and with shrewdest insight, and often bring great principles to bear

on bewildering details in a most original way. In all great questions that affected the welfare of the country, his discernment as to what might be the results of any given course was truly wonderful. Indeed, in many smaller matters, from a boxing-match to a murder surrounded by mysteries, he was equally at home. I recollect cases of the latter description, where long before the messengers of justice had tracked out the missing links in the chain of evidence, precisely the same thing had previously been pointed out to me by my friend. I need only refer here, by way of illustration, to his essay on "Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts."

I remember, too, the chronic excitement in which, as I may say, he lived throughout the period of the Indian Mutiny, surrounding himself with piles of documents of all sorts on the subject. He had a son engaged in it, and his son-in-law, Colonel Baird Smith, was the chief of the Engineer staff at Delhi; and ties of that kind could not have failed to quicken his interest. During the many years that I was so closely associated with him, this was the only occasion on which I ever saw his gentle nature roused to indignation. I recollect how intently he watched for the arrival of fresh tidings, and the horror he evinced at the massacre of innocent women and children. For a time, indeed, he was so thoroughly absorbed in the progress of the Mutiny, that he could not well apply himself to anything else.

His writings, as dealt with in this Memoir, must have shown how anxiously he viewed the great crises that arose during his lifetime in the history of his country. Some passages in his Essays—full of energy, originality, and character—were thrown out of the "Collected Writings," simply because they passed into the discussion of purely temporary questions.

His conversational powers were truly wonderful. He would start away from the most ordinary and commonplace point or fact, and by a process gradual, yet not to be traced out fully to one's satisfaction afterwards, he would rise to the highest poetry. This characteristic has been often noticed; but there was another which I do

not remember to have seen so prominently pointed out. It was this: that often in conversation with him, you were seized with doubt whether he was not hoaxing you and hoaxing himself at the same time, so absurd were many of the propositions propounded with an air of gravity and assurance of conviction unparalleled. Such projects were so deliberately referred to again and again, that, though at first you humoured him by a kindly acquiescence, feeling that they were mere dreams and half-hoaxes, yet a certain element of seriousness arose from the very persistency with which he pursued them. I will give one example. Though he was now over seventy years of age, and was engaged with the "Collected Works," of which some three volumes were still to do, he would entertain me with details of a magnificent project to do the greatest work that had ever been done—the "History of England" in twelve volumes. The History of England, he said, never had been written as it should be written. Froude's History was the only one that approached his ideal; and he gave the impression that several popular histories were not of much account in his mind. When I asked him about the time we should need to live to see this done, he would say, "The 'Collected Works' will be finished by such and such a date; I shall knock them off quickly so as to let me begin. Provided that you undertake the narrative portion of the work, I will follow up with the pictorial description of all prominent characters. We can thus easily produce three volumes in a year, so that it could be done in four years at furthest." And so, with persistent repetition, he would dwell on his great scheme, and go over and over its details, adding another theme to that endless subject, "Memoirs of the Unborn," which he himself once thought of writing. It is true we never proceeded so far as to fix the size or style of the volumes.

Unlike most authors, Mr. De Quincey rarely had occasion to consult the authorities from whom he quoted. Had he required to do so, what he conceived to be insurmountable difficulties would have appeared before him, as the chief portion of his library remained at Lasswade,

while those books which were beside him were either stowed away in boxes, or were immured amid the *débris* which surrounded him. These obstacles, I believe, much intensified the powers of a naturally marvellously retentive memory. When any question arose as to the accuracy of a quotation, he was in the habit of throwing back his head on his chair, shutting his eyes, and remaining for a time perfectly motionless as if asleep. In such cases I found myself thinking, "Now he is engaged in overhauling the contents of that wonderfully capacious memory." If it was a line of poetry on which the doubt had arisen, he usually, as it were, awoke quoting the stanza complete in which the line occurred. With the Greek poets he was as familiar as with the English, and when in the course of his reading he came upon a Greek quotation with an accent misplaced or awanting, he at once detected it. Even in cases where authors disagree as to the spelling of words, he readily referred to where these differences occurred. As an instance, take the following in reply to a query by the printer as to the word "caligraphy" being found with one "l" and again with two, which also may serve to show the trouble he took to verify everything :—

"According to all analogy I should have expected the word to be written with a single 'l,' the adjective *καλός* being so uniformly spelt with a single *λ*; and resting upon this consideration, I had in one of the proofs, and in one single instance, altered the word to *caligraphy*. But, feeling some doubt, I consulted three or four different lexicons, all of which doubled the *λ*. And I have since met the word written *callig.* in a most carefully edited MS. of Porson."

Here is another instance of the same character :—

"I am very sorry that the question about *porticoes*, at p. 170, having been laid down on the table close to some letters brought by the Irish post, did not meet my eye for more than two hours after it must have been brought. In answer, I should myself be disposed to decide for *porticos* without the *e*."

At p. 112 of the "Confessions" he had written :—

"Any larger allowance, most reasonably she [his mother] urged, what was it but to 'make proclamation to my two younger brothers that rebellion bore a premium; and that to mutiny was the ready road to ease and comfort;' " and on a query being made whether the verb 'to mutiny' here was not a mistake for a noun substantive, and whether the 'to' should not be deleted, he replied thus, with ready instance:—"Yes; it *was* intended to use the verb; that is, according to common usage of treating an infinitive as a noun substantive, as, *e.g.*—

'For not to have been *dipt* in Lethe's stream
Could save the son of Thetis from to *die*.'

—SPENSER.

Immersion in Lethe, *i.e.*, could not save Achilles from *death*. But, on the whole, perhaps better to delete the *to*."

On its being pointed out to him that at p. 90 of the "Confessions" he wrote *the groom*, when that individual had not been mentioned before, and that the expression was not clear, he replied:—"This is a just remark; and I am greatly obliged to the author of it. The best way to remedy the fault, without making a necessity for too large a disturbance of the text, will be—1, to substitute for '*the groom*,' '*a groom of Mr. Lawson's*;' 2 (in order to gain space corresponding to this change), to delete in the line immediately following '*gloom and*:' it will then stand, '*to throw despondency*.' '*A groom of*' has numerically the same *letters* as '*the groom*' (*viz.*, eight), only it has one more interspace. Again, '*Mr. Lawson's*' numerically has nine letters; '*gloom and*' has eight. The little difference, I presume, will not much matter."

The odd resources on which he would fall occasionally, to gain a little time for the writing of a note or addendum, are shadowed forth in this little note:—

"8 P.M. now striking.

"MY DEAR SIR,—The line of MS. on p. 320 arose in this way: I felt that an extract from Addison was required in strictness to support the reference to him; but

in my hurry, not having the passage ready, I fancied that this *caveat* might lay an *ad interim* arrest on the press, so as to gain the time requisite, or to cause an inquiry. But now—as I presume the time to be gone—the citation (not above half a page) might be introduced quite as seasonably among the supplementary notices of the Preface.”

De Quincey was very abstemious—a man of the simplest tastes—as I had ample opportunities of observing during the years that I was associated with him. Often have I heard him descant upon the beneficial properties of little delicacies that friends had sent him—frequently things so utterly simple that most people would not have deemed them worthy of remark,—a pot of black-currant jam, or even a pea-flour *scone*, calling forth many words of grateful appreciation. As a stimulant, he preferred a particular preparation of brandy; and his maximum allowance of this during an evening on extraordinary occasions, when we would discuss at length, say, the *Coming* History of England, the Indian Mutiny, the Chinese War, or the latest notorious murder, was measured in a manner peculiar to himself—*two wine-glasses two-thirds full*.

His now much-reduced doses of laudanum he regularly took largely diluted in water. His reason for this was, that when taken as supplied by the chemist it caused a very annoying and even painful itching in the nostrils. He seldom used a spoon or measure, as from long habit he could, by holding up a wine-glass to the light, accurately measure out the required quantity. This glass was then filled to the extent of about two-thirds with water. It has been erroneously supposed by some that this mixture in the glass was quaffed as others did wine. So far from this being the case, I have seen the same glassful stand on the table during a long evening with only occasional sips being taken out of it. Even after his long indulgence in opium, no one knew better than Mr. de Quincey the danger of a sudden increase to his daily allowance. This was only to be done by

degrees, and if by any mistake or inadvertence his daily allowance was suddenly increased, the effects were at once felt. I may here recall an instance of this. On the occasion referred to Mr. de Quincey had been complaining for some days, and in the evening, after partaking of his usual dose, went to bed, giving instructions that he wished to be called at a given hour in the morning. His attendant, on calling him at the hour named, and getting no reply, entered the room, and found him in a state of stupor, which caused some alarm. I was at once sent for, but in the meantime, from the simple appliances which had been used, he had so far recovered, that by the addition of a table-spoonful of brandy he was soon in his usual state. He explained to me that, feeling exceedingly unwell and greatly pained during the night, rather than disturb his attendant, he got out of bed in the dark, and finding his phial containing the laudanum, applied it to his lips, thinking thereby to relieve his sufferings. He was afraid he had taken more than he intended, but an examination of the phial showed that, after all, he had not so far exceeded; the effect which the small additional dose had produced being probably increased by the enfeebled state in which he then happened to be.

Many a time, whilst living at Lasswade, has he reached my office utterly wearied out and fit for nothing—for he would persist in his pedestrian exercises in very wet and trying weather; after taking one or two opium-pills, in a short time he would become “lively as a cricket,” able not only to arrange the business he had come upon, but to indulge in sprightly conversation, which he would brighten up in quite a peculiar way with little jets of humour.

It has been noticed by others that, notwithstanding his apparent fragility of frame, he was wiry, and able to undergo a good deal of physical fatigue. Indeed, he was a first-rate pedestrian, and kept himself well in exercise. He considered that fourteen miles a day was necessary for his health. When in Edinburgh, the quietude of the Meadows and Morningside made them

his favourite resorts. I recall the account which he gave me of what befell him on one occasion in the course of his daily perambulations at Lasswade. In his own graphic words, delivered with an air of solemnity mingled with twinkling humour, the relation was to me as amusing as it was characteristic. Not far from his cottage he tracked out a space of ground on two highways, where comparatively few foot-passengers were to be met with. These were connected by a cross lane, and having, by some process of his own, measured off a distance of three and a half miles, this multiplied by four made up exactly his fourteen miles. All seemed admirably calculated for quiet reflection and exercise combined. It so happened that at different points on the two highways a number of men were employed in breaking "metal" for the roads; but as these were all engaged on the side opposite to the footpath, and the highways were a considerable breadth, no interruption, he thought, could arise from the operations in which these men were engaged. He accordingly began his perambulations, and all went well for a few days. These stone-breakers, from seeing him passing and repassing so frequently, and having ascertained who he was, thought it but respectful that they should, in their own fashion, pass the compliments of the day. These, with very slight variations, consisted of, "It's a cold morning, sir;" "How are you this morning, sir?" "Are we going to have snow, sir?" "I hope you are well this morning, sir," &c.; such questions being continued during the whole line of route. These inquiries, though monotonous, were kindly meant; and, of course, must be responded to in the same spirit. At first he began to call out his replies across the road, but as some of the men were, they said, rather hard of hearing, he found it difficult to make them understand. He was not a shepherd from the mountains, who was versant with all the approaching changes of the weather, and besides, these men who were always in the open air should know more about the matter than he did; and in answer to the inquiry after the state of his health, if he were to bawl across

the road, "Pretty well, I thank you," that might not be correct, and he became quite puzzled what to do. He thought of purchasing a dozen or so of weather almanacks, and by giving one to each man, leave him to understand that it contained all he knew of the subject. But as his own health was even more variable than the weather, and as no Old Moore or Belfast man had, so far as he knew, published anything on *that* subject, he was forced to abandon all hope in this direction. As a last resource, he resolved on his first outset each morning to walk along the enemy's line, and thus get quit of all further inquiries during the day. On making a start in this way, each man, thinking he had crossed the road to enjoy a "crack," stopped work, and resting on the end of his hammer, began accordingly. One, an old soldier, recounted his campaigns; another told him how much he suffered from rheumatism, &c.; so that by the time he reached the last of the file he found that he was half-an-hour too late for dinner, and had lost half his day's exercise. In despair, he betook himself to his own garden, and continued his exercise along the gravel-walks until he had made up his fourteen miles.

Even at seventy years of age he was active and vigorous, and easily out-walked me, though I was a much younger man. I remember on one occasion, when visiting him at Lasswade on a particularly hot day in mid-summer, I proposed that he should accompany me to the house of an old friend, a papermaker in the vicinity. To reach the paper-mill we had to descend one of those ravines on the Esk already alluded to. On returning from our visit, there was between us and Lasswade a steep hill, which De Quincey ascended like a squirrel. I found myself at the top quite exhausted, while he had all along kept up an unremitting monologue on the Beauties of Herder—that being the particular subject which he had then in hand. On my remarking on my own condition he smiled, and at once set off on a disquisition on the evils of city life as opposed to the freedom of rural life, as affecting physical condition.

Mr. de Quincey had a great dislike to all formalities.


Visitors, many of them from long distances, were frequent at his house. To all he was courteous, hospitable, and communicative; but invitations to dinner, particularly where strangers were expected, caused him, as he said, unheard-of misery. I have sometimes fancied that some of his occasional migrations to lodgings in Edinburgh may have been due to some threatened dining-out calamity. No one, perhaps, knew him better than his intimate friend, the late Professor Wilson. Meeting the Professor one day, nearly his first words to me were, "Well, how is friend De Quincey?" I replied that when I saw him yesterday he was rather complaining, and that I was then on my way to visit him. "Ah!" said the Professor, "I hope it is only caused by one of those small matters about which he is so frequently worrying himself, such as the loss of a manuscript or some other trifle." At that moment an open carriage happened to pass, the occupant of which saluted the Professor, who, after returning the salutation, continued: "There," said he, "goes one who cares nothing for trifles; he makes no secret of being due thousands, and yet goes lolling in a carriage about the streets as we see him; whereas if De Quincey were due a five-pound note he would be one of the most miserable men in existence, and would never be seen in public. Say to him when you call that I would be pleased if he would come and dine with me to-morrow at the usual hour. You know the difficulty of dragging him out to dinner. Say that we are to have no strangers, and that I will see to a dish of hare-soup *à la* De Quincey being on the table."

I could have added many anecdotes to these; what I have said may help to bring some of De Quincey's characteristics nearer to the reader. He was most ingenuous, most lovable,—a delightful friend and companion, if you made the allowances which were in fact demanded of you before venturing into his society. I look back upon it as one of the pleasures and privileges of my life, that for so many years I should have been on such a footing of friendship with one who was so gifted, ingenuous, and noble.



CHAPTER XXVII.

THE COLLECTED WRITINGS.

NCE engaged in the work of collecting and revising his various articles scattered here and there for upwards of a quarter-of-a-century, De Quincey had little reserve-strength for original production. He dropped most of his old relationships. But now and then he threw off a most characteristic article for *Hogg's Instructor*, or, later, for *Titan*; making us wonder at the versatility and power he still possessed. As little did he now as in his earlier years confine himself to one groove. We have learned articles on grave historical questions,—such as the guilt of Anne Boleyn, *apropos* of Mr. Froude's earlier volumes; acute discussions of the etymology wrapped up in local names, especially some of those of Westmoreland; articles on distant countries and their development, particularly on California and on China, in view of the war which was then progressing between England and it; on the opium trade and its influences, a matter on which he was well qualified to speak; "Hurried Notices of the Indian Mutiny," a subject which for a time possessed his mind; and bright little *jeux d'esprit*, glimmering with wealth of fancy, humour, and knowledge.

It should be borne in mind, however, that the large scheme of the "Collected Works" was not proposed at the outset. Probably, if it had been, De Quincey would

have retreated from it. It was only proposed to issue a few volumes of "Selections, Grave and Gay," under which title the earlier volumes actually appeared. Mr. Hogg proceeded cautiously, and won the old man on bit by bit, as it were, till at length the thing was done. This necessitated, as we shall see, readjustments of contract, in several ways, which rendered necessary the utmost tact and care. De Quincey's satisfaction with these arrangements at their various stages we shall have to record by-and-by, but the disposition of the author may be guessed from an anecdote. Some difficulty arose at an early stage with respect to the works that had appeared in the *London Magazine*—the representatives of Taylor and Hessey claiming absolute copyright. At hearing this, De Quincey was rather inclined to be jubilant than otherwise, saying that he need not painfully revise works which he could not reprint, and which did not belong to him. But the claim was found, when Mr. Hogg had to deal with it, to be baseless; and the work proceeded. De Quincey, however, would never have fought for his rights in this matter; and the difficulty of a publisher who found himself embarked in such a scheme with an author who was so indifferent to his rights in works that had become classical may be guessed.

In fact, from the various editions of the "Confessions," in their original form, which had been issued De Quincey derived no monetary benefit, though it was found, on grounds of legal contract, he was quite entitled to have done so.

Once at work, it is astonishing to see how, under Mr. Hogg's judicious management, the volumes proceed; though, in the practical work of the press, it is very touching to come on testimonies innumerable in the MS. notes and proof-sheets committed to our use, that De Quincey's very regard for others, his dislike to seem peremptory, his delicate desire to show how fully he respected the hints or the feelings of others, often led him into difficulties and gave rise to misapprehensions and mistakes. Added to this was his habit of trusting to verbal messages in his general dislike of note-writing,

and his occasional complete repulsion from it. All was intensified by his inveterate incapacity to relieve himself of the *débris* of former undertakings ; so that leaves and slips and magazines and books were constantly going amissing. Amidst all, it is beautiful to see how the old man blames himself alone, and shows nothing of a querulous or embittered or repining temper. One instance out of many of the manner in which he ran the risk of obscuring very plain and simple directions, by appending minute explanations on the margin of his proofs, we give in fac-simile. The printers in the following sentence of the "Confessions" had omitted to put a full point at the word "Lakes," and, instead, after a comma, had *run on* with a small "t" at the word "that ;" giving, of course, a wholly different sense from that which he intended :—"My plan originally had been to travel northwards, viz., to the region of the English Lakes. That little mountainous district—lying stretched like a pavilion between four well-known points, viz., the small towns of Ulverstone and Penrith as its two poles—south and north ; between Kendal again on the east (and Egremont on the west, measuring on the one diameter about forty miles, and on the other perhaps thirty-five—had for me a secret fascination, subtle, sweet, fantastic, and even from my seventh or eighth year, spiritually strong." But De Quincey did not, as most other experienced authors would have done (the wisest course, too), content himself with the plain correction of it ; he appends a long and minute explanation. And not only this ; but he has over and over again to add an "*N.B.*," saying that the printer will understand that a line drawn through such casual explanations indicates only that these spider-like memoranda are quite unconnected with the text, and not to be printed.

Though he regarded his rooms in Lothian Street as his workshop proper, he had his times for going out to Lasswade, where he was then pretty sure to be found. Appointments were made for him to meet there any person whom he desired to entertain. We find, for example, notices of visits from one with whom reminis-

To Compt. This is import-
ant to attend to this.

According to the punctu-
ation as it now stands

X That little mount. district
will be understood as
put in apposition That
is the technical term used
by most of our grammarians
with the region of the
P Eng. Lakes.

X on this construction sim-
ply interprets P*

But that is not at all my
meaning. X is nominal case

to that for me a recent fasci-
ation

* i.e. Ya man
sh. ask - What is the
region of the Eng. Lakes
answ. w. be
That little m. dist.

But this is quite
wrong.

cences of old days could be exchanged, as in the close of this short note:—

“MY DEAR SIR,—My non-performances after circumstantial notice have been so many, that I can hardly hope for any credit, when I tell you that on Monday next [which is *March* 3, I think] I shall be in Lothian Street with the MS. all ready for the press. My endless failures in keeping the day fixed by myself were really unavoidable under the nervous sufferings of the time. But now, and for a fortnight back, my health is greatly improved under a great change of regimen: and were it not that Professor Lushington comes over to-morrow for a visit of two days, I should have come over to-day.—Ever yours,
T. DE Q.”

Even Mr. Carlyle is not above making permanent record of “taxes and botherations;” and we can easily believe that De Quincey had sometimes uncomfortable as well as pleasant ties to Lasswade in these years of labour on the “Collected Works.” The following notes attest this:—

“MY DEAR SIR,—For the last two days I have been besieged by letters from Lasswade, relating to irregularities in the settlement of taxes during the last ten months, when my daughter has been in Ireland, and also under a disputed point as to the lease of our house—whether in law to me, or to one of my daughters—some annoyance I had on Thursday and Friday. But this morning’s post brings me a letter which makes it necessary for me to await the appearance of my daughter Emily by an early hour, so as to concert with her (who only can furnish the explanations) the settlement of this business.

“It is vexatious to stumble at starting. But, in spite of this interruption, I can certainly guarantee the *entire* article of 150 pages by 9 A.M. on Monday.—Yours truly,
T. DE Q.”

“MY DEAR SIR,—The affair at Lasswade is more embarrassed than ever. The several versions of facts are all contradictory, and I am now waiting for, I hope, a final explanation from Ireland.

"My agitation at the prospect of utter ruin past all repair has prevented me from paying any serious attention to the various proofs lying here. But I will endeavour this morning to make the requisite alterations. But I must mention to you that the press has never sent me (according to the usual practice) the original copies of the 'Goethe.' Now, why should I need this less than all the others which have been invariably sent? The truth is, I have a twofold want of it—first, for the ordinary purpose of consulting in those places where I distrust the accuracy of the compositor; secondly, for the purpose of obliterating my own pencil-marks, which I would not for all the world have on the margins.

"Surely the reason for not sending this is not to spare me the mortification of seeing the book cut into fragments. So long as there was a chance of my saving the volume by my representations, I did all that I could. But now that the volume is destroyed as one of a series, I have no wish or right to interfere further. You, doubtless, had consciously the right to destroy it, because you it was that, doubtless, undertook the responsibility of destroying it.—Yours truly,

T. DE Q."

The following shows the value he attached to fair and appreciative criticism. Mr. Hogg had sent him copies of the *Athenæum* and *Scotsman* with notices of the earlier volumes of the series, and he thus replies:—

"MY DEAR SIR,—I am greatly obliged to you for your yesterday's communication of the *Scotsman* and the *Athenæum*. I should imagine that, amongst *weekly* journals, these two were exactly the most extensively influential—the first in Edinburgh, or perhaps in Scotland—the other throughout the whole island. And the *weekly* journals, coming so early in the career of a book, and from their low price being so extensively diffused, I should suppose must tell for half the battle. Certainly there is no other journal whose favourable verdict I should so highly have valued and wished for. I have kept the *Athenæum*, whose judgment is more than kind, for this day. Meantime will you inform

Miss Stark * where is the regular place of sale for the *Athenæum*. After these two decisive and energetic reports, I am comparatively careless as to any unfriendly ones in narrower circles that may follow.—Ever yours,

“T. DE Q.”

But even critical journals did not always escape the doom that visited bits of his own *copy* and proof-sheets. They were mislaid before they were read, and were, for the time being, irrecoverable. Books which he borrowed for the purpose of reference got overlaid, and had sometimes to be returned, in answer to the urgencies of librarians, without his ends having been accomplished, as in this case:—

“MY DEAR SIR,—I return you Bentley’s ‘Milton’ and *Tait* for 1851, according to your desire, and beg you to excuse the trouble I have caused you. I was naturally anxious before returning them to accomplish the object of borrowing them. But this having unfortunately been found impossible, perhaps you can at some future time borrow them again. Else I shall lose the whole benefit of my ample references to Bentley’s ‘Paradise Lost.’ The *Economist*, which you sent yesterday, was thoroughly and wilfully malicious. The *Lyceum* was more laudatory than the case deserved; and laudatory in a double way—*virtually* in the space assigned, and *formally* in words. But also, which I most prized, was the closing reference to a criticism of mine, *not recent*, in the article on Mdlle. Schurmann. I am greatly obliged to you for the two journals, which last night I returned.”

On another occasion we find him in arrear with something like thirty volumes, which the librarian will not allow to lie over any longer:—

“Now,” he writes, “if to-morrow, any time after 2.30 P.M., you could send over, I would have 20 or 25 ready for removal. This clearance will, of itself, clear a road

* [Miss Stark, the sister of his landlady in Lothian Street, was most frequently trusted with his messages, as other letters will testify.—ED.]

to others, of which at present, from the intermixture of papers, I cannot even decipher the lettering. Next, hear this Rhadamanthian sentence, perhaps slightly too severe, inflicted on myself, the culprit: that never again *will* I, or more shortly *shall* I, seek or find any benefit from your privileges at Mr. Mudie's. Towards the certain ratification of which righteous award, I decide that you receive (suppose next week) from me one guinea, and remit the same to the aforesaid Mr. Mudie to secure for myself the privilege for twelve calendar months. Access to books, at least to that current literature which Mr. Mudie offers, I must have; but not therefore at your expense and to your infinite annoyance. *Pray, pardon my crime.*"

Though on more than one occasion he has to mourn that "no waste of time is more useless or irreparable than what is spent upon explanatory letters; yet, having no intelligent messenger, What resource," he asks, "is left?"

This is another letter pressing somewhat helplessly in the same direction:—

"MY DEAR SIR,—You do not apprehend my meaning? One single illustration, or instance, will clear up the case. What I wish is, to have a list of the articles already received by the press. Why? Simply that I may thus know what articles they have NOT received.

"For instance: I count upon the paper entitled 'Coleridge and Opium-Eating' as upon one of the most effective articles; but I am utterly in the dark as to where this paper is—whether *chez moi?* or *chez la presse?* (I speak French, simply as being the briefest way of conveying my doubt.)

"Now mark the difference to me according to the answer:

"1. On the assumption that the paper is in *my* possession, then of course I will seek till I find it; and there will be no labour thrown away. But,

"2. On the counter assumption that the paper is all the while in possession of the press, the difference to me would be this—that I should be searching for perhaps half-a-day; and as it is manifestly not on my table, I

should proceed on the postulate that it must have been transposed to the floor. Consequently the work would all be unavoidably a process of stooping and all labour lost, from which I should hardly recover for a fortnight. This explains to you my earnestness in the matter.

"Exactly the same doubt applies (and therefore exactly the same dilemma or alternative of *stoop* or *stoop not*) to the paper on *Greece*, and to some others."

The next is more cheerful :—

"I have had two letters since Monday, which for different reasons I wish to show you. But at this moment I do not see them. One is from Mr. Sylvanus Urban, whom I recall as amongst the very *incunabula* of my literary notices. The other is from the Westminster Reviewer of Froude, a kind and really interesting letter from the just views (just in *my* eyes) which he takes of English history in that section."

The following suggests a very odd error into which De Quincey somehow fell—no doubt vaguely confusing Mr. Anthony Froude with Hurrell Froude—and under which he laboured at the time he wrote his ingenious notice of Mr. Froude's first two volumes in *Titan*, a notice which that historian no doubt read with gratified feelings—notwithstanding that on one or two points the writer was not wholly at one with him :—

"MY DEAR SIR,—1. Mr. Froude's death I do not infer from the expression *late* Fellow ; for *late* in that position (both in Oxford and Cambridge) is equal to the French *ci-devant*, not equal to the French *feu*. But on other grounds I am pretty sure that he has been long dead.

"2. The title, I fear, of Guilt of Anne Boleyn would promise too much. And the real object which I had by me all along was—the volcanic character of Henry VIII.'s reign. To me it appears that some title simply announcing a glance at this stormy period would be best."

Sometimes complications and delays arose from his partiality for footnotes. This is a frank confession in reference to Professor Wilson :—

"MY DEAR SIR,—I have entangled myself in a far longer note than I had intended; but I will extricate myself and end in half-an-hour. Meantime, being upon the subject of Professor Wilson, it will be received with indulgence. I do not thoroughly understand what part I have not returned; but whilst I am searching for it, that the press may have something to go on with, I send the accompanying."

This "accompanying" was as likely as not to yield no more help to the press than if it had come from a man who had never before been in contact with the practical exigencies of a printing-office. But helpless as he was to prevent such misunderstandings and complications, he was most considerate for those inconvenienced by them. The following note will show this:—

"MY DEAR SIR,—I am exceedingly sorry for the trouble I cause; and moreover I become painfully conscious that the article may not prove such as to justify being stayed for. But if it is stayed for, the rest will certainly be ready by 10 A.M. to-morrow. . . . Being so overmastered as I find myself by nervousness, perhaps it will be better that I send myself to the press—to save loss of time to the press runner. I am at present greatly dependent on Tea; and as soon as I have had *that*, I hope to be a new creature.

"It disturbs me to find that I have been constantly working at the wrong part. My notion was—an erroneous notion, it seems—that, when at any point I could not satisfy myself in the expression of a thought, then it was open to me to go forward, leaving a chasm to be filled up afterwards when it became necessary to make up the text into sheets."

His exceeding desire to oblige and to aid those who were on a friendly footing with him is well brought out by the efforts he made to write articles for the first numbers of *Titan*. He had just had a somewhat serious prostration; and, in addition to his nervousness, was threatened with a failure of eyesight, and had occasional visits of lumbago. A few letters will bring out

his goodwill, which prompted extreme efforts in a low condition of health :—

“MY DEAR SIR,—For some weeks my eyes had given me so much pain, and consequently so much anxiety about the result, that at last I wrote to my daughter Emily—begging her to return to Lasswade. This she did last week. But now (through intermission perhaps of candle-light reading) my eyes are again better. What I wish therefore to do, before returning to Lasswade, is to make up one, or if possible two, volumes; the sixth and seventh.

“I was attempting to write a short paper of three pages—‘Anticipations of the Coming War in China;’ but I fear that for the coming number of *Titan* any contribution is now too late. I am also writing a paper on ‘Opium.’ In one fortnight or three weeks I hope to have left the new volumes in such a state of preparation, that a very few trips of your press runners will suffice to wind them up.—Yours very truly,

“THOMAS DE QUINCEY.”

“MY DEAR SIR,—From your not sending this morning, I begin to fear that I am too late: which will give me pain—having suddenly recollected (which until Sunday I had entirely forgotten) that the remodelling of *Titan* commences next month. This, indeed, I had often repeated to myself, with the idea that next month would be the call for something novel; forgetting, unfortunately, that the 1st of next month was the time.

“You, I imagine, will be likely to make one natural mistake—viz., that this paper being about China, is simply the old story a little recast. Not so. When you have the whole, you will see that it has nothing in common with the old article.—Yours ever, T. DE Q.”

This little note accompanied the article when sent :—

“I am far from being satisfied myself with the first part of China; therefore cancel it altogether without mercy, if you feel disposed to do so. I am perfectly in earnest. In the second part I shall do better.”

And the following came along with the proof when returned :—

“I am sure you will do me the justice to believe that I have done my best. But the result, I fear, is bad, and this from various causes. It is also *dreadfully too long*. It is therefore with perfect sincerity that I propose as follows :—That the whole should be cancelled ; and I will cheerfully undertake to write such another paper as will reimburse the loss which in that case you will have sustained by the costs of the press. Every man is liable to some failures, and this, I fear, is one of mine ; but a most unwilling one, and in part owing to *lumbago*, which at times prevents my rising from my chair.”

Shortly after, he began the article on the opium trade ; but the difficulties under which it was accomplished are best indicated in the note we next print :—

“MY DEAR SIR,—Through the whole of last night I sat up, and have the whole in a rough state. But very frankly I confess to you—that from the extreme difficulty and delicacy which I found in treating the subject of opium as it affects our Chinese relations—unless you can be kind enough to allow me this coming afternoon, I do not see any way of winding up the whole properly. Want of sleep, and the laudanum which I was obliged to take, have reduced me really to a state of perfect confusion.

T. DE Q.”

The labour on the “Confessions” proved particularly trying. Many letters before us bear this out. We select the following :—

“MY DEAR SIR,—I am in a great perplexity. I have been for some days engaged *chiefly* upon the closing passages of the ‘Confessions,’ which it is that tax my powers of every kind most. But I have endeavoured also to keep up with the current demands of the press ; as part of which keeping up I send the two pages 16 and 17. But I am quite at a loss about what it is that the press wants *most*—wants *immediately*.—Ever yours,

“T. DE Q.”

De Quincey himself, in the Preface to the edition in the “Collected Works,” makes us acquainted with the

process through which the whole work was passed. It was filled up, detailed by means of secondary incident, and the close made far more effective by the introduction of several additional dreams.

In midst of difficulties incident to the work itself came others incident to domestic arrangements—such sweeping and cleaning as students have from of old been prone to regard as gratuitous. To De Quincey the intimations of such intended visitations came like a voice of terror. It is in a tone of mingled pathos and resignation that he makes his publisher cognisant of his misfortunes. Needless to say that, as time went on, he did not improve in matters of order and regularity. Sometimes, indeed, he was thrown into despair. He is now at work on the sixth volume. Dr. Parr would almost seem to have had his revenge for some severe things De Quincey had said of him:—

“MY DEAR SIR,—I am suddenly thrown into despair. All the Parr proofs (on the belief that they were entirely used up) would have been by this time burned, but for the accident that some arrear of queries arose upon them. Hence, *not* burned; but so chaotically confounded with all other papers, that (if the press finds them indispensable) I must spend this night in searching for them. I have already found two packets, but discontinuous. Miss Stark will learn what is the exact amount of aid that *I* separately can give in this awkward dilemma.”

The next note evidently has to do with the eighth and ninth volumes, and presents alternative proposals for the close of the eighth and the opening of the ninth—the necessity for which had arisen from some part of the article on “Pope” having gone amissing.

He experiences perpetual interruptions from things going amissing, necessitating search. His energies seem to be wasted in searching. Letter after letter is a mere apology for delay on that ground. Here is one little glimpse of his trials:—

“MY DEAR SIR,—It is useless to trouble you with the *ins* and *outs* of the process—the result is, that, working

through most parts of the night, I have not yet come to the missing copy. I had fancied that when the press sent for the notes, this implied that the whole of the text was received. But as it turns out that I was mistaken, I am going on with the search yet,—being walled in by superfluous furniture, in so narrow an area (not larger than a post-chaise, as regards the free space), I write with difficulty, and the *stooping* kills me. I greatly fear that the entire day will be spent in the search. Could not the press, in the interim, proceed with the paper on ‘Oracles,’ since the filling up of the chasm would be ensured on Monday?”

But sometimes he *can* exult over a lucky accident, when Chance kindly does the shortening for him, as in the case of this article on “Oracles:”—

“I had a particular wish to *shorten* this article on ‘Oracles.’ Consequently the accident could not have fallen better than where it *has* fallen. The rest goes on from page 257 to page 283—quite enough of it. I send the next twelve pages corrected. Now if this is set up, I shall find it easy to connect this part and the coming. All of us will escape about a dozen pages of yawning; and you, separately, will escape the vexatiousness of writing letters for the purpose you kindly suggest of borrowing the journal where originally it appeared.”

His excessive fastidiousness as to phrase pursues him; sometimes finds him out too late for the printer’s comfort; and we often find him thus writing on returning proofs:—

“These four slips, by the way, would have been *virgin* slips but for the accident that suddenly I discovered myself to have described Grassini’s voice twice at least, if not thrice, in the very same words, as a contralto, and thus fell under the necessity of troubling the press with a darning.”

And scarcely has he recovered from one domestic avalanche of whitewashers, painters, and so on, when another is upon him of quite a different sort. People who can pay more liberally than he can take the best suite of rooms over his head.

Amidst all this, his consideration for others is constant,

careful, descending to the minutest matters. The next letter will abundantly show this :—

“MY DEAR SIR,—Miss Stark having been very unwell for the last two or three days, and very weak in consequence, I feel unwilling to burthen her with *both* books on a hot day. I have therefore sent what struck me as the most urgent, viz. (the Advocates' Library) Bentley's 'Milton.' Pray pardon the trouble I cause you. In some way I will contrive to send over the other book.—Ever yours.”

In 1858, as in 1853, his relations with the press were encumbered with many misunderstandings; but that he was still as ready to take the blame to himself and grieve over it is seen from the following :—

“MY DEAR SIR,—It is most unfortunate, nor am I able to guess the cause, that I, who am rendered seriously unhappy whenever I find or suppose myself to have caused any loss of time to a compositor, whose time is generally his main estate, am yet constantly doing so—unintentionally, and in most cases unconsciously. This morning, had I known what was the slip or column brought by Roderick,* I could have *instantly* returned it, for, in fact, I corrected it all yesterday [I think by 3 P.M., or thereabouts]; and if any messenger had called, or if I could have commanded the services of Miss Stark, it would undoubtedly have been at the press a full twenty-four hours before this date.”

The following will show that his relations with Mr. Hogg in financial matters were as satisfactory as on other points :—

“*Tuesday, December 22, 1857.*

“MY DEAR SIR,—Your proposal of this day for the absolute purchase of the 'Selections, Grave and Gay,' in seven volumes, already printed by your firm, and three more *to be* printed, is so exceedingly liberal, and so much more for my advantage than I could reasonably have

* Roderick was the boy usually entrusted with the messages from the press, as being a favourite with De Quincey.—ED.

expected, that I am anxious to express by the earliest opportunity how cheerfully I accede to the terms. I am hurried at this moment by Miss Stark, through whom lies my only chance of reaching you to-day; I defer therefore until to-morrow one or two questions upon points of detail—which do not, however, affect anything essential in my answer.—Ever yours very truly,

“THOMAS DE QUINCEY.”

This arrangement was shortly afterwards concluded by deed of assignment.

In monetary matters, his excessive concern for others, and his fear of benefiting at their expense, are as distinctly characteristic. The notes which follow bring this out; and few would expect from one who had had for so long a time to traffic with the world, and had made experience of its hardness and selfishness, such a generous proposal as closes the second letter:—

“MY DEAR SIR,—I am astonished at your enclosure—a thing wholly unexpected by me. What has interrupted my intercourse with the press, is not solely illness, but something which would be better explained in private conversation, and confidentially. I will make an effort to come over to-morrow. But, being weak, and suffering from my late attack, I do not feel *absolutely* sure of accomplishing so much.”

“*Saturday, April 23, 1859.* .

“MY DEAR SIR,—I am uneasy at receiving no communication about the thirteenth volume; fearing that this halt must be owing to some misconception such as *I cannot even conjecture.*

“At present, however, I do not write with any reference to that subject:—what I have for some time back been wishing to speak about, is the position in which your payments are just now waiting your decision upon my proposal in this note. . . .

“It seems to me that some of the many conceivable changes in the commercial world,—such as houses, the best established, are liable to,—may possibly have occurred since January 23, 1858, bringing along with it some

corresponding call for altering the *dates* of payments, or their *amounts*. For instance, with regard to this particular payment, it might be a convenience to substitute one for £50 instead of £100; or to alter the date.

"This, you perceive, relates to the mere *transfer* of payments—making them fall at a later period than according to their present tenor; but, secondly, if further experience has led you to think or to know that the total sum offered by you was too much, be assured that I will cheerfully agree to any alteration which you may propose.—Ever yours most truly, THOMAS DE QUINCEY."

This is his report on a little article in *Titan* to which his attention had been called:—

"MACARONIC LITERATURE.

"This seems to me a capital paper, sufficiently comprehensive as to the illustrations, and everywhere admirably expressed in all that concerns the history and the legislation of literature under this section. Pity but we had all the subdivisions of literature as well treated.—At the moment of taking leave of it I observe 2 errata:

"On p. penult. (viz., p. 417) left hd. col., in the Sapphics—1st stanza—

'Ille with ease can facere alba nigra,
Rendere et lucem piceas tenebras;
Ille can: rursus piceas tenebras
Rendere lucem.'

The colon after *Ille can* should to all appearance be deleted.

"On the last supplementary rag to p. 418—

'Puff duppos omnes humbuggos'

should apparently be—

'Puff dupos omnes, humbuggos'
'All dupes of Puffs, all humbugs,' &c."

His attention to minute details of a certain kind, which went along with all that tendency to confusion in other respects, was very noticeable; and in nothing more than in the exceeding care he took to find titles really expressing the character of the various volumes—

"MY DEAR SIR,—In cases of so much hurry, and

where the models referred to are not at hand, it is almost impossible to avoid making one's self misunderstood.

"*Historic*, it seems to me, is indispensable to the mere intelligibility of the title, if *Problem* is retained. But the shortest form would be :

STUDIES
ON
SECRET RECORDS :
WITH
OTHER PAPERS.

Perhaps better, if after *Records, Personal and Historic* were introduced, all the rest being left unaltered. . . . To the word *Historic* there is the objection raised ; but unfortunately, *without* it the word 'Problems' might mean scientific problems, &c., &c.

"On the whole, in our difficulty my vote is for the title as last modified—spite of the *Historic*."

"MY DEAR SIR,—I wish to suggest a change in the title of some importance. I think you were quite on the right track in striking out the *items* on the title-page (1) 'Protestantism,' (2) 'Oracles,' &c. But there is left by that elision a serious objection. *Sceptical*, it strikes me, cannot be used *absolutely*, but only in relation to some *assigned* object, known and indicated. If I took for a title the word *Answers* or the word *Refutations* it would be asked at once, *Answers to what? Refutations of what?* And in the case before us it will be said, *Sceptical*, *i.e.*, disposed to doubt, or to suspension of assent, but as to what?

"It is true that the word *is* used absolutely in one colloquial case, *viz.*, when we say 'Kant was a sceptic; Hume was a sceptic.' But even there it is an *elliptic* expression, hardly (I should think) admissible into a title ; for we all understand *sceptic*, or *doubter on the doctrines of Christianity*. But this is not at all the meaning in *our* case. Nor again, if this *could* have been the meaning, would it suit the open and explicit purpose of a title to

express it otherwise than at length. What I propose, as a mode of surmounting the objection, is :

ESSAYS,
SCEPTICAL AND ANTI-SCEPTICAL,
ON
PROBLEMS NEGLECTED AND MISCONCEIVED.

“*P.S.*—Do not suppose me wedded to my own workmanship. Any title that evades the objection (1) of ellipsis, (2) of the consequent irreligious sense emerging under that ellipsis, will suit me.”

One of the most interesting notes in our bundle from his hand is the following written in the beginning of 1859, which will be read, we believe, with no slight interest, on account of its giving his own opinion of that most ingenious essay on the “*Toilette of the Hebrew Lady*,” and because of the reference it contains to the picture of Coleridge :—

“MY DEAR SIR,—Considering its *Biblical* relations, over and above its interest of curiosity, I really think this Hebrew Toilette—with the exception always of some six or seven—the best in the collection. But never had I such a tight-rope dancing effort of agility, as in the correction of the six pages (equal, I calculate, to seventeen or eighteen pages of the present types) : absolutely the paper is unsized. Why, I fancied such atrocities confined to trans-Atlantic (not even heard of in Cis-Atlantic) literature.

“Is there a long foot-note (do you think?), on the enthymeme as restored by Facciolati,* in the paper on rhetoric? Because such a note I found myself walking over this afternoon; and, except by some oversight of mine in *not sending*, I cannot understand how it should find its way under my slipper.

“This is a description of S. T. Coleridge’s person—not only accurate, but the sole accurate among many that are libellously false—drawn from my own knowledge, guaranteed defyingly by myself, and sure to give pleasure in many quarters, but unfortunately broken off and mutilated by some of the important interruptions incident to

* This note, of course, appears in the Essay on Rhetoric.—ED.

furious hurry. This, which occurs in the latter half of Coleridge and Opium-Eating—and some others interrupted in similar way—if past remedy in the article, I could, upon knowing *that*, repair the loss in the Preface."

As careful readers know, this loss was repaired in the said Preface.

The following letter written to a friend about this time gives his own version of his condition and powers, and will suffice to show how infirmities were so growing upon him that it is surprising he now managed to do what he did:—

"Tuesday, May 24 [1859].

"MY DEAR SIR,—Here is a sketch of one day as I now drag through daily with very trivial variations:—15 min. bef. 4 A.M. I find myself broad awake. From this time to 7.30 (making 3 hours + $\frac{3}{4}$ ths) I am a miserable suffering cripple—not daring to stoop or stretch out my arm. I find all the time little enough for doing such wretched processes as I am compelled to call *dressing*; not much of a dandy am I, yet, after all, from sheer abstinence in every department, I come forward to the *der-rock* (Westmoreland) in good fighting spirits. 7.30 A.M. (I am speaking of to-day) comes breakfast, tea and two or even three biscuits. 8 A.M. come the newspapers, which villainous compounds are full of malice and of endless misconstruction; these it is that fill the atmosphere of life with irritation. They also meet with irritation, but their answers are instant, effective, perfect. 8.30 A.M. comes a letter from Tipperary that would require three laborious days for a commensurate answer. 9 A.M. to nearly noon I write a supplementary page or more to a half-sheet on Lessing—for the 13th volume is drawing near to its close. Noon or thereabouts my trifle of dinner is served up. In twelve minutes more a stranger, whom there are unanswerable reasons for seeing, summons me away. He detains me till ten minutes after three. I then find that Johnny is looked for every minute to fetch the proofs, in which no progress is made. Near 4 P.M., while thinking in perplexity on this subject, most

naturally I fall asleep, having accomplished and rounded a day of thirteen hours. 7.15 P.M. I awaken, and find barely time to sign, ever,
T. DE Q."

The next are the two last notes we have from De Quincey's hand. They relate to points arising in the preparation of the fourteenth volume, which was not completed at the time of his death. Their date must be in September and October 1859. *The first* is wholly undated, the second wants the year:—

"MY DEAR SIR,—I do not exactly know what to do:—'Orthographic Mutineers' I have corrected fully for the press, but a page is missing—for which I have searched through two hours, and no doubt it is here, but I have not found it.

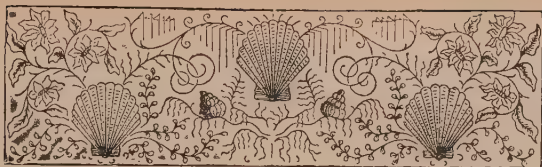
"I wrote a long letter on Monday night—not yet sent—and I have a few more things still to say. But I am too weary at present (*i.e.*, till resting) to say them."

"MY DEAR SIR,—It kills me to write notes, after writing all day upon margins. Neither could I make intelligible, except in conversation, what is the state of the case. So it is—that I exceedingly wish to cancel or delete nearly two pages of the forty on which I have been operating. *The reason* when I see you.

"Next.—Seeing that the article on J. P. Richter in the *London Magazine* of November or December 1821 is by much the most eligible article that occurs to my memory among the unused,—would it not be easy to have this printed by to-morrow night?

"My Preface I was obliged to interrupt by the correction of these forty pages, from which since 8 P.M. I have never raised my hand except for forty minutes."

Some of the articles which were contributed to *Hogg's Instructor* and to *Titan* between 1850–59, for one reason or another, were omitted from the original "Collected Writings"—not always intentionally, we incline to believe, since they are in some cases deeply marked by De Quincey's best qualities. The most noticeable of these were "The Literature of Infancy" and "The Scottish Universities."



CHAPTER XXVIII.

LOTHIAN STREET.

"42 *LOTHIAN STREET*" was an address very familiar to De Quincey's friends, or to curious literary persons, for a long period of years. We have so headed this chapter, because the *Lothian Street* life ran alongside the *Mavis Bush* life in a very unique way, and to it we are indebted for a more plenteous relay of letters than for other periods. But from first to last *Mavis Bush* remained his home and headquarters; *Lothian Street* his workshop rather than aught else, one or other of his daughters either being at *Lasswade*, or ready to return at any moment from any visiting, to care for and minister to her father. The reason which *Mrs. Baird Smith* gives in the following note doubtless had some share in the result:—

"In all these times, when there seems to have been no letters, we were within easy reach. After my elder sister's marriage, the increase of notes to us at *Lasswade* seems to me a somewhat pathetic sign of a struggle between his perfect trust in us and a consciousness that it was not a usual course of action to leave two young women so entirely alone in a solitary country place; and of course he felt this even more when my younger sister was left. He really could not manage his work farther from the press, and nothing which would have been natural in other cases, such as my sister removing into *Edinburgh*, would have answered with him; so that it really came quite naturally about our keeping the cottage at *Lasswade* ready to receive him when he felt inclined for it, especially as it was a very friendly home for us, which *Edinburgh* had ceased to be, as we knew few people there."

The point brought out in that note should be particularly borne in mind. Strange as were De Quincey's ways in many points, he was always from the death of his wife in communication with his daughters, either personally or by letters. His habit of walking considerable distances to visit them, if he were in lodgings for the sake of nearness to the press, is alone to be taken to account for the absence of letters during lengthened periods. If he did not see them often, he always wrote to them regularly; and the self-denial exercised in the performance of that pleasant duty can only be realised when his general dislike of letter-writing, his age, and his feebleness are taken into account. We have seen that he acted as sole tutor to his sons, and that to no point involving the welfare of his family was he indifferent. What is really remarkable is the closeness of his concern for them in association with such simplicity, absence, preoccupation, and erratic ways. The first inroad on that happy unity of the Lasswade household, which we have already found him picturing in a letter to Miss Mitford, took place in 1853, when his eldest daughter, Margaret, married Mr. Robert Craig, the son of a neighbour.* Mr. Robert Craig had purchased land in Tipperary, as Miss Mitford hints, and the couple immediately on their marriage went and settled there, first residing at a place called Pegsborough, and afterwards at Lisheen.

In 1854 his daughters Florence and Emily were in Ireland, on the occasion of the birth of a daughter to Mr. and Mrs. Craig. The way in which the old man's thoughts circle round that grandchild, and constantly return to her from the most diverse excursions, causing him to write almost daily letters, is, indeed, very touching. We shall give a few selected specimens—no better than the rest, but full of felicities of thought and

* This was John Craig, who was well known in connection with the Scotch Whigs, and took an active part in the movement of Parliamentary Reform in 1794-1809, being a correspondent of Lord Jeffrey, Mrs. Fletcher, and many others. He wrote one or two books, amongst them an elaborate work on Political Science. He died at the patriarchal age of ninety-four, at his son's house in Ireland.

expression, and bright with that gentle humour that so characterised him; and we doubt not that the reader will readily forgive the preponderance of matters of family interest, as we can thus better than almost by any other means show what Mr. de Quincey's later years really were, and the subjects that most occupied his mind.

"Friday, September 29, 1854.

"MY DEAR EMILY,—I received yesterday your letter announcing the good news from Tipperary. To-night or to-morrow I will write to M. I am glad, according to my ancient doctrine, that it is a *daughter*—not a son. For I differ altogether from Señor de Erauso (papa of Catalina) on this question of comparative pretensions between sons and daughters. How the equation may stand in Biscay I cannot judge; but as regards our own insular world, I look upon boys as the true and dreadful nuisance of society. This little Tipperary thing, for instance, in less than ten or twelve months will be ready for use as the liveliest of playthings. But a surly boy, after sulking for five or six years without finding the proper use of his tongue, would be first beginning to suspect a pugnacious value in his fists. By the time when the new little Flor. (if such is to be her name) will have lived a long life, with incidents and thoughts many enough to fill three octavos, the wretch of a boy would be dimly developing his first foggy ideas on the subject of orchard-robbing. I take considerable interest in the question of *name*. Eva is good, but not to my feeling so good when in combination as singly. Grace is a pet Irish name; but, I suppose, there is no excuse in any family tradition for this.—Ever yours affectionately."

Shortly after this he writes respecting the christening:—

"October 1854.

"MY DEAR EMILY,—To you, as being (I think) my latest *adviser** from Tipperary, I address my answer. Bear with me if I am abrupt or incoherent: perhaps *that* is better than being tedious. Strange it is that I, who have three fair daughters gifted with a marked talent (two in promise, and M. in full development) for letter-writing, can yet pretend myself to so little power in that direction. And that little grows less when, from profound sedentariness, I grow preternaturally nervous.

* "*Adviser*," sender of *advices*, *i.e.*, of news or intelligence.

“First of all, concerning what is just now first in importance, viz., dear little Eva. Glad I am that she has gotten herself a name, for really it is an awkward case, when giving the health at a dinner-party of a little lady, as one's own sole representative in the next generation but one, the advanced *vedette* on the frontier of posterity, plainly to confess that she is anonymous, and also a Pagan, or at least that the Pagan question is for *her* still an open question. *Any* name therefore was beginning to be an advantage. As to the particular name chosen, it is to *my* feeling a very pretty one. Two novels at the least have been written by men of high pretensions bearing this name for their sole title; one by Sir Edward Lytton, which perhaps I have not read, but certainly do not remember,—the other by a man whom I think of with even more respect, viz., Maturin. It was not, however, by any means amongst Maturin's better works. Still, being Maturin's, it could not be otherwise than interesting. Maturin's ‘Eva,’ if I remember the story at all, is the subject of an odious persecution from some hyperbolical feather-bed of a *soi-disant* lover, who does not improve his position, or at all win upon the sulky reader, by being also a dissenting parson. His reasons for dissenting I do not know, but the reader's reasons are undeniable—‘*first chop*’—for dissenting from the Rev. Featherbed; and, unfortunately for *him*, Eva's dissenting principles are equally strong; but then, unfortunately for *her*, the odious and reverend lover draws some iniquitous support from a dissenting aunt. The issue, I fear, is tragical. The true lover, he whom Eva and the reader countenance, is non-suited. Such, at least, is my fear. And it is a proof of Maturin's power that now, at this moment, though left behind me by thirty years, the tale and the very name of Eva are nevertheless set and steeped in some indistinct haze of sorrowful impressions, whilst my separate remembrances of the fable are no more than what I have related. Simply through the power of Maturin, who was verily and indeed a man of genius, the name of *Eva* has shaped itself to my symbolising fancy in the image of a white rose—overcharged (I do not say *surcharged*, as suggesting odious thoughts of income-tax) with rain or heavy dews—dimly descried in a solitary garden through the very dimmest twilight of earliest dawn upon a morning of June. Is this too much for a conscientious man to pack up into that one little tri-literal name of *Eva*.

“This name naturally throws back one's thoughts upon the

original person who bore it—that unhappy lady, the fairest of her own daughters, but also, one must suppose, the most woe-begone, if she knew the extent of her own trespass. ‘*For this we may thank Adam!*’ is the dreadful cry of reproach ascending from billions of generations which the Miltonic Adam figures to himself in sad anticipation. But, begging his pardon, he had himself, like a veritable sneak, forestalled that reproach. He had, in the language of London villains, ‘split’ upon his partner—the very last baseness even amongst our domestic rogues, that final and crowning step which, being foreborne, leaves even to the thief a conscious arrearage of nobility and possible redemption. A man that should have stolen a pocket-handkerchief might (I conceive), by some memorable act of public service, redeem himself, but— . . . This whole matter of naming, however, if we cast a backward glance at its earliest beginnings, though an inscrutable, would—were it *not* so—be an interesting theme for investigation. It is not only a prehistoric, but a premythical, not only a premythical, but even a prefabulous and a pretraditional thesis. *My* thesis ends by indicating in Eve one feature of intellectual delicacy which places her in advance of her species by perhaps a myriad of generations, and to this recent baptismal epoch in the first year of dear little Eva’s experience it is a most appropriate feature—renewing and reverberating from a modern case echoes of the very same solicitude in the proper choice of a name as naturally displayed itself in the very earliest cases. Eve, like the council of Pegsboro’, put forth an earnest anxiety (for earnest it must have been to secure any commemoration at all in a record necessarily so austere condensed as the Mosaic) in order to construct a significant name for her sons. On a hasty consideration it might seem as though Pegsboro’ and Mesopotamia [which, or else Kurdistan, or else Armenia, I will assume to be the region inhabited by the primitive household of man] had pursued a separate and peculiar object in this study. But perhaps not. Eve sought for a name that should, by a sort of shorthand, express significantly any pathetic circumstantialities connected with the birth (or with the immediate antecedences to the birth) of the particular son concerned in the nomination. Events or changes externally attached to the biography of the child were naturally contemplated as the keynotes for the several names; so that the bare names of Eve’s sons composed a solemn register—cryptical and

shadowy, as being abstracts so severely condensed, but to herself fearfully significant, as secret mementoes of sad or joyous revolutions. For the Pegsboro' council, on the other hand, the names were sought—not at all with any view to incidents or household changes, but as expressing qualities of intellect, of temper, or of temperament which might reasonably be anticipated in a spirit of hope, since, even when naturally defective, by artificial culture any qualities may be indefinitely promoted. And therefore it is a most rational justification of a name to *my* thinking—not that it expresses a quality as emphatically existing at a time when powers are latent, but forecasts the possible growth and fructification of the tendencies and faculties which it signifies.”

Even this very commonplace incident sets him a-speculating; he runs over all the passing details, and tries to find a principle underlying the act and the necessity of naming, and brightens up his notes by the quaintest fun, as naïve, we think, as it is suggestive.

The “tri-literality” of the name does not escape him either, and leads him in the next letter to some classical references which are at once whimsical and illustrative:—

“November 18, 1854.

“MY DEAR FLORENCE,—I have written more letters to Pegsborough than without an affidavit you would believe. One I wrote to Emily, and a letter of eleven pages, last night. But when it drew near to its end, on retrospection of these eleven pages, it seemed to me that nine and a half were prosy or in some other way objectionable. Another, and I believe equally long letter, I wrote—how long shall we say?—perhaps ten days ago to you. But this contained so large a proportion of absolute nonsense, that I could not resolve to send it. You will suggest that I may be too severe a censor. Possibly, but the letters are still extant, and, when you come home, will speak for themselves. At present I will write only on two points:—

“1. As to dear little Eva, I rejoiced to hear that she had obtained a name, which is besides a very pretty name, and quite big enough for the present. But with the Romans of old *vir trium literarum* (a tri-literal man—a three-lettered man) was in bad repute; it was a comic expression for FUR, which unhappily means a thief; in fact, the Romans had no proper

name that could be spelt with so few as three letters. But leaving proper names, and passing to what grammarians call appellatives (words not expressing an individual, but a class or species), these short-sighted men should have remembered that not *FUR* only, but the first of all words, *viz.*, *VIR*, a man, is equally a tri-literal word. The greatest I call it, because from this word is derived *VIRTUS*—manliness, courage, virtue. Here's a rigmarolish paragraph, you say, about such a trifle as tri-literality. But if a tri-literal man is justly exposed to the scorn of that wise old Roman people as a *Guy* (Fawkes), a man of straw, or (to Anglicise it by a three-lettered equivalent) as a *HUM*, what shall we think of a *double* tri-literality? Why simply, or rather *not* simply but compositely, that he is or should be styled a *HUM-BUG*.

"2. On Thursday last but one, *viz.*, on Thursday, November 9, famous in London as Lord Mayor's Day, and nationally (is it not?) as Prince of Wales's birthday, I returned to the press my final revision of the Prefatory Notices to my fourth vol., so that any delay *since* then, be it known to Pegsborough, is due to some vile tri-literal man, who may take his choice of the names already provided for his use, *viz.*, *FUR*, *HUM*, *BUG*—any or all of them. However, I understand that, in spite of any such criminal person, ranging about like a lion and seeking whom he may delay, one copy finished and bound reached London by the express train *via* Newcastle of Monday morning, Nov. 13, and was in the hands of the London trade throughout the forenoon of that Monday for the purpose of being '*subscribed*,' as it is technically called (that is, presented by Mr. Groombridge's runners to each considerable publisher for a minute or so, in order that he may assign the particular number of copies which he separately requires). On Friday last I myself received a copy; and could therefore have sent one to Pegsborough; but recollecting that you had seen the American edition, I felt that there was no call for any special hurry. However, there is one novelty, *viz.*, an account of the murders perpetrated by Williams in 1812, which may a little interest you, and therefore I will forward a copy on Monday."

As he was interested in all the joys and hopes and cares of his family and each member of it, so, as we shall see, he tried to make them sharers of his labours and pleasures. They were his confidants and fellow-helpers.

The following to Mrs. Craig on her recovery will tell its own tale :—

“*Tuesday Night, December 5, 1854.*”

“MY DEAREST MARGARET,—I felicitate you upon your recovery, upon the beauty of little Eva, and upon the prospect (not by any means unimportant) that she, with her earliest capacities of enjoyment, will find herself in the grandest of all spectacles—viz., in the carnival of spring. What I mean is, that her birth has been felicitously timed ; for grandeur would be thrown away upon the eye that cannot connect, and upon the ear that cannot distinguish. In April next, when dear little Eva will have completed her sixth month, when, first of all, she will be capable of enjoying, there will be something *extra* to enjoy. That is, speaking Germanically, and therefore pedantically, as the *subjective* (viz., the power of spectating) will then be in the very meridian of its development in Eva, so correspondingly will the *objective* (viz., the thing to be spectated, or in base vulgar the spectacle), be travelling for three months—April, May, June—through all the stages of its revelation. *Before* April, for want of developed faculties in Eva, any spectacle would be thrown away. *After* April, when she will be ready, yet if spring were not ready, her powers would be thrown away for want of an object. But now, you understand, since (as Shakespeare luminously insists) that, that is, is—not to waste words on proving that *that*, that will be, in all probability will be—therefore it follows that, taking Eva as the centre of a secret and insulated world, the contemplating and the contemplated, the beholding and the thing beheld, the subject and the object, will blossom concurrently. Neither will outrun the other. No pulse of Eva’s sensibilities will perish for want of an object, no day of loveliness will perish for want of an observer. Eva, therefore, is invoked loudly by the coming spring as the reader of the silent legend. Spring is invoked by the tutelary genius of Eva as the lock whose secret wards made known to itself the powers of the key which deciphers them.

“There, now, is a metaphysical flourish of trumpets in glorification of Eva ; and very seriously it is true, that with the earliest of her self-revealing faculties will coincide the almighty spectacle of a resurrection in nature. A great internal revolution in herself will concur with a great physical revolution outside. And this I have always regarded as a signal privilege of a child.”

In the next letter, his old need of access to papers makes him press for the speedy return of his daughters to Mavis Bush:—

“December 4, 1854.

“MY DEAREST FLORENCE,—This morning—viz., Monday, December 4th—came into my hands your letter and Emily’s appendix. I had, however, previously possessed myself of a pen, and was in visionary conceit tracing out, whilst yet unaware of any communication from Tipperary, that letter which now, three hours later, I am actually writing. The fact is, I am alarmed at the premature explosion of a train which I had laid on Saturday (December 2nd) for drawing your attention in a leisurely way to Mavis Bush. The match has ignited the train far sooner than I had counted on. And thus it is possible enough that you may be thrown into needless hurry. It had happened that on Saturday the 2nd Mr. Findlay called, as sometimes he is kind enough to do, and on my explaining the general course of my correspondence with you—viz., that I write a letter—parboil it, as you may say, *i.e.*, half-finish it, then order it, in House of Commons phrase, ‘to lie on the table,’ during which repose several strata of other papers gather over it within a few days or hours, so that very soon it is ‘snowed up,’ and finally it withdraws into darkness. Hearing this, I say, Mr. Findlay kindly undertook to apprise you, or M. or E., how the matter stood, and that the time was drawing near when I should want various papers (now at Mavis Bush) for the fifth volume. This service I counted on his fulfilling about four or five days later. But, behold! yesterday being Sunday, the very next succeeding day he called with a *Times* newspaper, and at the same time left a note informing me that he already *had* written—viz., not to any one of you three, but to Mr. Craig. I am anxious, therefore, as the train is actually fired, to intercept any evil consequences. I announce, therefore, that if you could set off ten or eleven days from this, *i.e.*, about the 18th day of December, you will meet the most clamorous of my purposes. You see there are counter-perils to weigh off against the perils of procrastination. I declare it will be a lesson to me for the rest of my life not to hurry.

“Also I am in your debt, as offered some months back, £9, and this, if you want it with a view to the servants at Pegsborough, I can send by return of post in a post-office order. If not, I might as well pay it here *when you come*.

"I could not have avoided the cost of lodging here, such is the killing nervousness of the condition when one is haunted daily by an emissary of the press, whom, as a fifteen-mile traveller, it becomes about impossible to dismiss without his load of pothooks, when, as here, I could say call again to-morrow. I am sure that I could not have stood it. So I reconcile myself to the cost, else it would vex me. Twenty to twenty-two weeks I have been here, at a cheaper rate, it is true, by comparing with Glasgow or London; yet on an average spending as nearly as possible twenty shillings a week, washing included.* Add laudanum, brandy, and library subscription. I have spent four guineas more, and being killed with cold, I shall by means of clothes have spent hard upon thirty pounds when I leave. However, I owe not a fraction of debt—all is paid; and Mr. Hogg informs me that in spite of the *Crimea*, which operates dismally against literature, the fourth volume (viz., the last) has been welcomed by the trade in London much more zealously than the preceding three, and that this reawakening of the public attention is already *reacting upon the others*. I should long ago have sent the volume to you under ordinary circumstances. What delayed it was—(1) since I saw you last I have never once been out of doors; (2) I fancied you had seen most of it in the American edition. But I now remember that there is one addition not without interest—viz., an account of Williams' murder in London, subjoined by way of postscript to 'Murder as one of the Fine Arts.' It is, however, preposterously long, but that was owing to dire nervousness. I am now fitting myself out for facing the winds, and—but nonsense; on consideration, I will put the *machinery in motion*."

The following may be read with interest on account of its references to two questions of public concern in those days—points on which he was most anxious that his daughters should be enlightened, and in which they should be interested:—

"Thursday, January 11, 1855.

"MY DEAR EMILY,—I wrote a long letter to Florence on Sunday last, January 7, but, as I did not send it, perhaps in

* De Quincey thus had been in Lothian Street some months before the joint-visit of his daughters to Ireland was decided on—they went in September 1854.

strict equity I ought not to look for an answer. *Why* did I not send it? Partly because I saw no proper *envelope* lying ready, though I found one next morning, and I might therefore after all have sent it. But chiefly I condemned it as being too monotonous, for it contained little else than a dream, possibly symbolic, relating to Florence and yourself; which dream, whether significant or non-significant, occurred on Sunday morning. Such advantage, therefore, as belongs to callowness or freshness this dream had. On the other hand, it was dull, not offering variety enough. However, a dulness that forewarns you forearms you, so that after all I send it.

"In all the Edinburgh newspapers, nine or ten in succession, has appeared a notification that might have puzzled you had you chanced to stumble on it—viz., *Miss Florence and Miss Emily de Quincey, Lasswade, £1, 1s.*, amongst the subscriptions to the Patriotic Fund. It was I that sent this little offering, my motive being this, that for a special reason I could not myself subscribe, or fancied so. Yet it seemed almost disgraceful that no expression, small or great, of sympathy with so national a cause should appear on behalf of our Mavis Bush fireside; and therefore I forced myself to fork out a guinea. This sacrifice cost me a pang, even the extra shilling I wanted dismally. Yet, after all, on the Scriptural canon, I really *have* my reward. I took out this reward in sheer ostentation; for, being fully determined that not only my left hand should know what my right hand had been doing, but also that my left foot should know it, in case the said foot would oblige me by listening, I drew up the entry loaded with a double Christian name, which forced the printers (as I meant it should) to double round thus—

‘Miss Florence and Miss Emily de Quincey,

Lasswade, £1 1 0’

so as to clear out a wide space of blank paper as a foil or relief to the black emblazonry of the donation. It happened also that the very next in succession on the roll of contributors (a scamp who had the presumption to give only nine shillings) came hopping along with some name as short as *Bob*. Of course, if he would not belie and mystify his own identity to his whole circle of friends, he durst not prolong himself into *Robertus*. Consequently, he furnished what seemed a commensurate pedestal or basis to Mavis Bush folk riding overhead. This arrangement ran along through ten successive

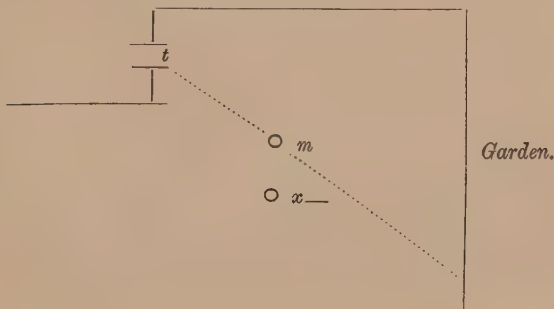
days, so long Florence and you rode upon the shoulders of Mr. Bob. At the end of that time, having collected—but observe, from Edinburgh, Leith, and circumjacencies—within forty shillings of sixteen thousand seven hundred pounds, the committee made a general recapitulation or *résumé* of the whole army of subscribers, which threw all into a different arrangement. This was published last Saturday in the *North British Advertiser* as a supplementary sheet; and I, in order that you might hereafter have a printed voucher by way of reply to all slanderers, bought a copy, lying here at your service. Give my best love to our dear cousins the Gees. I was most unwilling to seem, by any word or hint, to hurry you, knowing how pleasant would be a Christmas spent with *them*. But still I am becoming most anxious about home. I fancy that perhaps the Gees think much as *I* do about the Crimean War. Here is my creed: tell me, how far they dissent:—viz., that, however managed, it is nearly hopeless. Not as though we might not take Sebastopol; I rather believe we shall. But what final good will *that* attain? All that we *can* effect, it seems to me, are these three objects—(a) to establish a permanent nautical control over the Black Sea and (b) over the Danube. These two objects *without* a treaty, simply by gunboats and by three-deckers and Lancaster guns, we, united with the local resources of the Sultan, might *forcibly* effect. As to γ (*gamma*), the traitorous combustibles, the Christian population in the intestines of Turkey, and δ (*delta*), the two Principalities, we might perhaps gag them forcibly on some system concerted with Turkey; if not, are those objects indispensable? The great difficulty seems to lie in this, that Russia has no *heel of Achilles*: she is mortal nowhere. Meantime the Euxine and the Danube would be great jewels to win from her. And even as to the other points, where we *may* fail, and supposing also that we *should* fail, it is well to remember—as a profitable consolation—that hereafter against Communists and Red Republicans we shall need to invoke the aid of Russia, and to *rejoice* that she is strong.

“P.S.—I have just sprung a mine of envelopes, consequently shall write away until the mine is exhausted.”

“THE DREAM.

“This morning, being *Sunday*, a word unknown and unintelligible in this moorland, being in the native jargon, not un-

familiar, the *Sabbath*,—the hour (I should guess) 6 A.M., I had a dream, which dream was this. A door opened ; it was a door on the *further* side of a spacious chamber. For a few moments I waited expectingly, but not knowing *what* to expect. At length a voice said audibly and most distinctly, but not loudly, *Florence and Emily*, with the tone of one announcing an arrival. Soon after, but not immediately, entered Florence, but, to my great astonishment, no Emily. Florence wore a dress not as if coming off a journey, at least not a travelling dress, but a simple walking dress ; she had on a bonnet, rather a pretty one, but I should doubt if it had cost more than half a guinea (unless they charge high in dreams) ; and it was lined with rose-coloured silk ; but the ribbons, I think, were white (is *that* allowable ?) ; and certainly the prevailing hue of the general dress was white. Florence did not look back ; and how she accounted for Emily's not following is best known to herself. A shadow fell upon me, and a feeling of sadness, which increased continually as no Emily entered at the door, which, however, still stood open ; so, you know, there was nothing to hinder her coming after all, if it was that she had only been loitering. But it relieved my feeling of sadness that Florence, of whose features I had the steadiest view, seemed cheerful, though not smiling. I felt it strange that I could not question her, notwithstanding that obliquely she was continually nearing my position. If I could catch her eye I felt that I could speak to her—not else ; and this I could not do. What Florence was making for must have been a garden, still, solitary, and rich to excess with flowers past all counting, and gayer than any I had ever seen. The garden was on my right hand ; the positions, in fact, were these :—



"*T* is the door of entrance ; *M* is Florence ; *X* is myself in an unphilosophic mood of irritation, and, I fear, likely soon to become waspish if I should not succeed in arresting Florence's eye. However, I did *not* succeed ; neither did Emily come so long as I staid, which might be six to eight minutes. Suddenly all vanished ; the door, the garden, Florence, myself, all were gone ; and I was broad awake, with no chance of ever intercepting the obstinate and unfilial Florence on her diagonal route to the flower-garden. I should mention, in order to complete the sketch, that although Florence continually advanced in the sense of widening her distance from the entrance-door, nevertheless she never came nearer to me, for the chamber floor expanded concurrently with her steps, which is an awkward thing, you know, when walking a match against time. The garden, I should add, *melted* into the chamber, through steps of transition that were indescribable.

"Had anything special occurred to fix my attention upon your name ? Why, yes ; on the night before (Saturday, January 6, 1855) a man had sent me, as a book that might amuse me, a novel in three vols., 2nd edition, 1846, entitled 'The Lawyers in Love ; or, Passages from the Life of a Chancery Barrister.' It is a most absurd and extravagant tale, but showing that kind of talent which belongs to the construction of a pantomime ; and in this tale one of the heroines is called *Florence*."

Here is, on the whole, a hopeful letter from a septuagenarian sick-bed :—

"No. 42 LOTHIAN STREET,

Tuesday Evening, January 16, 1855.

"MY DEAR FLOR.-EM.,—Your—that is, Fl.'s—letter, starting me with the news of your return to Lasswade, not from the Orient but from the Occident, reached me yesterday morning, viz., Monday, January 15. I then was, and now am, lying sick in bed, and from some malady as violent as it was sudden. On Saturday afternoon this malady came on with sudden sickness, fever, and light-headedness ; for thirty-six hours I was very ill indeed. But at length my continued abstinence through three full days—during which time not two ounces have passed my lips—is beginning to tell, as no doubt it always will, upon fever. Which malady, I beg to say, was no growth of my own crazy system ; apparently it

could not be, since at the same hour of Saturday afternoon when I was attacked, two gentlemen students, fellow-lodgers in this house from the South, were attacked with equal violence, and one (if not both) took to the resource of bed ; and secondly, he invoked medical aid ; which I did *not*. All of us, I believe, are mending. Me, however, the fever, which was violent, has left so weak, that yesterday and to-day, on attempting to rise, I could not stand. But strength soon rekindles when the turn sets in ; and so, perhaps, on Friday I may be over."

Before he has well recovered he is equal to prescribing for the relief of others :—

"*Friday, February 9, 1855.*

"MY DEAR FLORENCE,—I heard with great concern from Ellen on (was it not?) Friday evening last—*i.e.*, this day week—of your toothache sufferings. Every day I have been on the point of writing to you about the remedy ; and I reproach myself heavily for having suffered my own miserable want of energy to interfere with the *instant* suggestion of so much practical counsel as my own bitter experience enables me to offer. This counsel divides into three sections—A, B, C. A relates to the *cause* of toothache. I pass to B and C. B indicates what relates to *clothing*. Warm coverings for the feet (lamb's wool fleecy hosiery, &c.), and above all, for the chest and shoulders, are indispensable ; and therefore, if from any cause you are not immediately in possession of the right kind, I will buy whatever you direct me, pay for them, and forward them at once to Lasswade. Have you and Emily muffs and fur tippets? C stands for *diet*. Now, I remember most distinctly a long course of atrocious wretchedness from a fit of toothache that never intermitted night or day through nearly three weeks, and, behold ! suddenly within two minutes, as if the angel of Bethesda had cried *halt !* it gave way, fled, vanished, and did not return through half-a-year, simply under the accident of a dinner more stimulant than usual. From dreadful ignorance—ignorance that was bovine, canine, bestial—I had been systematically feeding and nursing this accursed torment, under the fatal conceit that I was starving it, by a low vegetable diet. Fortunately, I had at length become infuriated by ill success. I resolved on trying the opposite system ; and, by mere chance, on this day there happened to have been dressed for dinner a superb sirloin of beef. This I

supported by a bottle of old port, and, as I am a living man, not one full glass had I drunk (simultaneously eating a square inch, not a *cubic* inch, of beef, and its reasonable proportion of gravy), when the foul fiend of toothache flapped his gloomy wings, and, like a gorged vulture, rose heavily, vanished, and for six months did not return. Now, comparing the three weeks' unrelenting persecution with the absolutely instantaneous flight of the monster, you will hardly feel a doubt but that this mere hint of a generous diet, falling on a system that by previous starvation had been disqualified for offering any resistance to a strong impulse, must have been the magic that worked the sudden revolution. 'Take up thy bed and walk!' was the summons, that would not be refused, of this memorable dinner. Not for vain carnal amusement do I rehearse this instructive fact, but for thy practical conversion, O daughter of lukewarm faith! Promise me that, if I send out a bottle of the oldest port, you will order for dinner a sirloin of beef (roasted), and will drink at the said dinner two glasses of the wine, undiluted; or, if a little diluted, not to reckon the water as part of the two glasses.

"I am in deadly depression of nervousness; spite of which, however, I meditate great exertions; and (with the benefit of a daily nine or ten miles' exercise) I believe that I could accomplish my plans. Towards these it is important for me to return home; and in the course of next week without fail I will do so. Meantime a wonderful sally of ingenuity has suggested to me that, by means of a previous concert between us, my return might be made available for a visit on *your* part to Edinburgh. You might come in by means of Cuthbert's carriage, for which, of course, I will pay, and take me up with my small quantum of baggage at *any* hour that suited you; *i.e.*, any hour from one to six. But let me know forty-eight hours before taking any final step in the matter. If one of the Miss Widnells should chance to find any motive for coming in on the same day, it would be easy for me to make room by taking my seat on a box of papers.

"Do not suppose that my delays in returning argue any uncertainty of plans. The plain reason is simply my immeasurable incapacity for business—above all, for that sort of business which lies in arranging papers or packing up books. However, if you or Emily will concert some scheme, I, on *my* part, will really make an effort.

"I have suffered much from my eyes since the influenza ; some days all but blind, and on some nights roused up for hours by the pain, and still more by the nervous uneasiness besieging them. Sulphate of zinc is all the remedy I have applied.

"Send my love to little Eva three times a week. Good night !—Ever affectionately yours."

Before he returns home he has set his heart on a "treat" for his daughters. The trouble he takes that his good intentions may not be frustrated is surely very commendable :—

"This page was written on Thursday night, agreeably to the date ; but all the rest is only *now* going to be written, viz., on this day, Friday, the 16th, hour 15 min. after 12. So I know not when you will get it.

"Thursday Night, February 15, 1855.

"MY DEAR FLORENCE,—Last night I wrote a line to you ; in fact, a line was all I *could* write ; for on Mr. Hogg's coming in and thus offering me the advantage of a safe transmission to the Post-office, I could not without incivility do more than write a hurried close, which I mention in order to account for its abruptness. On closing it, I said to Mr. Hogg, 'Now, this letter of mine, I feel certain, will cross one from my daughter.' And so it did. About eight o'clock this morning your answer to mine of Friday last reached me. As to the day of my return, as you leave that arrangement open to my choice, most likely it will be Tuesday. Meantime I write to mention that on two separate days of next week Julien (or is it Jullien ?) gives concerts. I am anxious that you and Emily should come over to one of the two. The tickets for us three, being 3s. 6d. each, will cost half-a-guinea ; and Cuthbert's carriage to carry us in and back, I have an indistinct remembrance, will cost about 16s.—at all events, not more than 20s. The whole, therefore, will at the outside—toll-bar included—not cost more than a guinea and a half, which I will pay, and without incurring any debt to Mr. Cuthbert. But early applications are needed for the tickets. So pray return an answer as soon as possible as to these two points : *First*, Will you come ? Is there any known hindrance at this moment, or likely to be at the time ? *Secondly*, If not, which of the two days advertised will suit you best ? The days are immediately consecutive—viz., Wednesday the 21st of February and Thursday the 22nd. For which shall I

get the tickets? There is always great crowding at these concerts, which (as you know) wear a vulgar, snobbish character, but always offer the attractions of a severely-selected and severely-trained orchestra, and *partially* of good music. And on this particular occasion there is the *extra* (and, to you and Em., I should think inestimable) attraction of Mme. Pleyell, the celestial pianofortist. Heaven nor earth has yet heard her equal. So say the London amateurs. As to myself, you know that I have had no opportunity of hearing her. It seems also that the orchestral accompaniment to her performance is to be unusually rich and full. Certainly to be hustled by a gang of snobs would be a hideous drawback; but *us*, as nobbs, viz., as occupying reserved seats, this overcrowding will hardly affect. I guess also, but doubtingly, that we shall have a moon. I have no doubt that one must be due about that time; but what I doubt is, whether she will not be too young to be available. Half-past ten to half-past twelve is about the time when she might be serviceable, if she could make it convenient. But in the infancy of the moon she goes to bed too soon, I fear, for *that*. Let me have your answer, if you can, by Monday. But do not send it over to Lasswade specially, at least by Ellen, for I gathered from her that at present you have but her in the house; and it is rather alarming to think of you two being left alone in a house so pestered with beggars, tramps, and outcasts, whom desperate poverty tempts always to robbery, and tempts successfully when opportunity favours. O heavens! what a long, prosy sentence! I repent it, deeply repent; but amendment, or amends, must be impossible unless by rewriting the whole letter. And in that case what becomes of the post?

"On Tuesday last I saw announced the death of Miss Wordsworth at the age of eighty-four. You would, of course, see the death of Miss Mitford. I was sincerely grieved. For the last fortnight an unfeeling paragraph has also been circling round the newspapers, started (it is *said*) by the *Leader*, that Miss Martineau's life hangs upon a gossamer—*enlargement of the heart* is her complaint, and at any moment it may be fatal. Yet I remember that ten years ago all the world believed her to be dying of cancer at Gateshead, spite of which she drank tea with us seven or eight years later; and it is odd that but a month ago she was lecturing all round the Lakes. Through one or other interruption it is now half-past six. So I am forced to conclude.—Yours most affectionately."

“*Wednesday Afternoon, February 21, 1855.*

“MY DEAR GIRLS,—I write a single line for the purpose of relieving you from any perplexity as to our place of *rendezvous*. Almost to a certainty I shall join you at Mavis Bush, either (which is possible) at breakfast, or (which is probable) about noon, on Thursday, the 22nd of this current month. No opening for mistake, or for what the Scotch call *dubiety*, lurks to my thinking in those words. It is, however, conceivable, and therefore in a shadowy sense possible, but far indeed from probable, that I might be so retarded as to make it ineligible to set out on a toilsome walk through snow. Snow on the ground, and perhaps lying in drifts locally, would make it hard for me, not acquainted with the present condition of the roads, on the *cis* and the *trans*, the hither and thither side of the weathershed between Lasswade and Edinburgh, to know how much time to allow for driving; so that it is difficult on the whole for *me* to calculate so nicely as *you* may do on your side of the difficulty. If a snowstorm should come on and bar your return, I can, of course, easily procure bedrooms for our party in a Princes Street hotel.”

In the following he finds himself unexpectedly precipitated on a minor point of casuistry:—

“*Saturday Night, March 3, 1855.*

“MY DEAR DAUGHTERS,—I was disturbed last night at finding no natural or spontaneous opening (how barbarous, by the way, is this collision of *ings*—finding, opening!) for any private communication. But, consistently with good breeding, how *could* one introduce such a parenthesis into the public current of one’s talk? Private and confidential memoranda it would be dishonourable for a stranger to overhear. Consequently, it would for us be the point of politeness to co-operate with the stranger’s efforts to *un-hear*—to *dis-hear*—to *non-hear* (how shall I express it?)—every syllable and fragment of susurrations that might, though insulated, betray the tendency* of our colloquy. But, if such be the *set* or secret direction of the true politeness, then, saith the ferocious casuist, the *acmé* and tip-top attitude of politeness must lie in whispering. Yet, on the other hand, can anything be more vitally impolite than whispering in company? So that the extremity of

“ [—cy of the —quy] what dreadful jingling echoes!

politeness actually terminates and eventuates in the very excess of rudeness; and here, as in so many other cases, the philosophic axiom is realised—that *extremes meet*.

“But metaphysically to account for the incommunicability, and to show that the accident of last night in George Square was no accident, but the inseparable necessity of the situation, does that indemnify me? Healeth that my wound? Doth *that* apply a plaister to my burning, smarting fury? I trow *not*. What I wanted to confer upon was *inter alia* (which, being interpreted, signifieth *amongst divers otherments*) as to the Music Hall temptation, viz., Mendelssohn’s ‘St. Paul,’ on the morning of this day, Saturday the 3rd of March, which then figured for a moment in the character of to-morrow. I wished to know whether, reading its newspaper promises by the light of our own recent experience on Thursday the 22nd of February, we could flatter ourselves that the pleasure would at all answer to the cost. Left to myself on this Saturday morning at six o’clock, for so early had I sate (or, more correctly, *sitten*) up perpendicularly in bed looking and listening for the newspaper embodying the last telegraphic (1) details, or (2) rumours, or (3) guesses, or (4) jibs about the poor assassinated Czar; which newspaper (heretofore coming, even in deepest January, duly and Scotché *pointedly** at half-past six) now, of course, under the eternal disturbance (oftentimes the *inversion*) of the equities, proportions, reasonable expectations attached to life, did not come until an hour later; left, therefore, to my solitary meditations at an hour when all the street slumbered, I speculated in vision upon the question whether my poor crazy energies could so far rally as to rise, shave, dress, walk over to George Square about 11 A.M., and with you two concert some plan for procuring tickets, and finally at half-past one presenting these tickets to the anarchs and lords of misrule who pretend to guide the confusion that for ever beclouds the avenues to the Music Hall. Much I fear that, had all been smooth sailing, my powers of combination for facing the several steps of the arrangement, as to tickets, carriage, rendezvousing personally would have floored my drooping energies. But when I heard that a worse crush than on the 22nd was pretty sure to be met by a system of police measures in no respect less reckless, I

“* *Pointedly*, the current Scotch for *punctual* is *pointed*.

shrank hopelessly from the enterprise. This, therefore, is gone. As respects the future, however ; at the theatre, the entrance and the exit are beset by less pressure and anxiety. So, if you see announced any performance of whatsoever class that to your fancy promises well, warn me in time ; that is, supposing me to be *here*, which generally will not be the case. You must be dull, I am sure, in your imprisonment at Mavis Bush, where even the mavis, I believe, is a rare guest. Some studies meantime I could suggest, which, perhaps, we might pursue with advantage in partnership. Which be they ? Why grammar, universal grammar (as it is termed), as treated, for instance, by Harris in his ‘Hermes.’ ”

The following, which is characteristic in its own way, was written to Miss Agnes Duncan, a neighbour of his sister at Bath, who had some time before paid a visit to Mavis Bush :—

“ March 5, 1855.

“ MY DEAR MISS AGNES,—Florence is writing to you, and *that* ripens a purpose which I had to revive my two days’ acquaintance with you by endeavouring to interest you in my immediate literary plans. All the people that ever I cared about in this world I wished to interest in anything I was meditating of this sort. But why ? Was my vanity so vivacious ? Oh no, vanity or egotism had nothing to do with it. From the conversation of every human being I know at once whether it is possible for that person, so and so constituted, to care much about this or that thing which I may have written. Yourself I recognised as one of those who would feel an interest in my ‘Autobiographic Sketches.’ And suddenly, whilst I was supposing myself to have perhaps dreamed all *that*, came your letter, recording the trouble which you must have had in searching up those old *paper-asses* through long since defunct magazines. How can there be any vanity after *that* in my reporting a far smoother route by which you will reach the same object, much improved, and also very much enlarged ? Really I begin to feel as if in this last sentence I were writing a puff for the newspapers. But, on the other hand, this is an evil that besets every communication that ever *was* or *will* be meant to recommend any plan whatsoever, small or great. I for my part am satisfied if I interest a sufficient number of

readers for the present to carry off the edition. Hereafter I will endeavour to establish a deeper attraction.

"Meantime, I wish to inform you that chapters altogether new will be introduced among the sections of this forthcoming volume. And secondly, as your kindness may lead you to ask how soon the volume will be finished, I beg to explain that it moves at such a rate as to imply about a month further of progress. A most whimsical difficulty retards me, which possibly I mentioned to you—viz., that it is easier for me to write a letter from Edinburgh to Astrachan, than from Lasswade to Edinburgh. In the former case you point a gun levelled directly at the object; but in the latter you shoot round a corner. To reach Lasswade, even for *us*, having only two servants, is a process accomplished sometimes through a two days' journey. Such a labourer gives the letter to such a farmer; unless, indeed, when some nondescript animal happens to call that goes all the way to Lasswade. Such nondescript is reported to me at this moment. Pray allow for my necessity, and ever believe me, my dear Miss Agnes, faithfully yours,

"THOMAS DE QUINCEY."

The next letter will perhaps justify the position accorded to it by the testimony it bears to his thoughtful concern for any one in difficulties, or merely lonely by reason of being in a strange place:—

"Monday, May 7th, 1855.

"MY DEAR EMILY;—What am I staying here for? Chiefly and originally for the papers with which to finish the 'Suspiria.' One of the most important papers, viz., 'The Daughter of Lebanon,' is not (as I thought it *had* been) in this last parcel. I am puzzled how to proceed. Meantime, I am and *have* been for three or four weeks suffering greatly from the aching of my left arm,—intermitting, one might call it, and yet it rarely slumbers altogether; but it fluctuates, and at times it taxes my powers of endurance most heavily. I have an anodyne lotion for rubbing it, and this gives some relief, but not such as can be always relied on.

"The result of all these elements co-operating for annoyance is, that I am perplexed, and even distracted, and on Wednesday or Thursday I think of coming home. I am, however, desirous to ask of you and Flor to come over some day according to your own convenience, for the purpose of calling on a young

lady from Wales, a Miss M——, sister to a student at the College. She has come hither, viz., to these lodgings, with her brother, who had gone about a month since to fetch her. They returned after a fortnight's interval, and they seem lonely enough. She is musical, and appears amiable. If you see no objection, it would be kind to take a little notice of her. Perhaps in some way you could combine the use of Cuthbert's brougham (I paying, of course) with some plan for calling here. Or perhaps better to wait till I see you.

"I am horrified at the course which the democratic movement is taking. The great meeting or meetings of Saturday in London must, if issuing in *any* practical expression, explode in consequences fearfully revolutionary."

The next letter, bearing date May 1855, exhibits his relations to the domestic animals, and his sympathy for them in their sufferings;—

"MY DEAR MISS CRAIG,—I will make a new beginning. But why so? Simply for the reason that follows. There is in this house, 42 Lothian Street, a being (metaphysically speaking, I must not call him a *person*) who is not altogether a friend of mine, but far less an enemy, because systematically I extend toleration to all Jews, Cretans (though charged with lying), dwellers in Mesopotamia, Mahometans, Pagans, even to donkeys (provided they retire for the purpose of braying into a secluded study); in fact, to all the world, except only atrocious duns convicted of a fourth offence, and obstinate performers on the bagpipes. Therefore, of course, I tolerate cats, of which race is the agent concerned in what I am going to report; for surely a cat stands far within the comprehensive circle of indulgence that I have traced. A few weeks ago I had a severe attack of influenza, which has obliged me ever since to lie down for an hour or two in the middle of the day. Naturally, in these circumstances, I sometimes doze a little. Waking suddenly from such a momentary lull, I became aware of a little drama in the very crisis of *catastrophe*. My letter to yourself lay extended on the breakfast tablecloth, close to it was a cream jug, and close to *that* a newly-opened bottle of Tarling's metallic ink, and quietly reconnoitring his opportunities was the feline pet of the house, who is also the sole criminal and traitor of the house. My movement in waking must have alarmed him,—conscience made a coward of him, and off

he bounced, upsetting—not the cream jug, which had been the secret magnet of his invasion—but Mr. Tarling's sixpenny-worth of chemistry. So much of the black deluge lodged upon the right-hand section of your letter as obliged me to condemn it for illegible ; else it was all written clearly enough. The deluge extended to the extremities of several remote slips, so that you may chance to find memorials of the wretch's transgression weeks ahead in future letters.

"Kant asks somewhat sneeringly, whether, as the poor horse shares so largely in human miseries, it had happened to the paradisaical horse that he had eaten any *forbidden hay*. I do not know, but certainly the cats of this terraqueous earth in all generations, from paradise downwards, *have* eaten, and even at this moment *are* eating, a monstrous quantity of forbidden cream. Yet, as regards any counter-reckoning or penal retribution on the part of man, ten thousand times over (to *my* thinking) the balance is adjusted, and the account squared, by the infamous cruelties of which man has tolerated the infliction upon cats. The household Ishmaelite is certainly the cat by means of its opportunities ; but, on the other hand, through its weakness, and the ubiquity of its presence, a cat offers itself to the first impulse or craving of devilish malignity in a cruel boy's heart,—and I am sure that the groans and screams of this poor persecuted race, if gathered into some great echoing hall of horrors, would melt the hearts of the stoniest of our race."

The next note will show how he had to undergo the usual ordeals by which the patience of popular authors is sorely tried—requests for copies of their books *gratis* :—

"42 LOTHIAN STREET, *Thursday, May 10, 1855.*

"MY DEAR FLOR,—This morning as early as seven, or some few minutes later, I received your letter, and also the three accompanying communications—one being from Mr. Lushington in Kent ; one from some unknown (and, so far as I have yet penetrated, *nameless*) society in N. America upon international copyright ; and thirdly, one from the librarian of some Manchester suburban institution, transmitting their honorary salutations ; but not, as we usually incarnate such expressions of homage or of courtesy, viz., in a gold box. No ; such is the increasing wickedness amongst this generation of vipers—absolutely *inverting* the old traditionary usage, and

looking to me, of all people, for the gold box. Not they to me, but I to them, am to remit the gold box ; such at least is the *virtual* reading of the case according to my way of spelling. The *letter* of their statement is this, that, being poverty-bitten, the society cannot fulfil the wish of their hearts, which points magnetically towards the purchase of my four darling volumes, but in default of that purchase are compelled to act upon the suggestion of a promising young member, who, after intense study, fell upon the discovery that I, by the happy privilege of my position, might pluck the four volumes as so many grape clusters from a vine, or, more truly (in relation to the money cost), as so many blackberries from a bramble. One is amused with the soft, velvety coercion of these gentle beggars ; and of course I can do no less than send the volumes as a peppercorn rent for the obliging incense of flattery with which they fumigate my nostrils."

The next letter we shall give points to one of the changes by which the Mavis Bush household was scattered :—

"Memorandum, *not sent until August 1.* Second memorandum, *not sent till August 2.*

"*Tuesday Night, July 31, 1855.*

"MY DEAR DAUGHTERS,—On Friday penultimate (*i.e.*, Friday last but one), being the 20th of July, I received *your* (meaning Emily's) letter, that letter which spoke of the wedding at some distance from Boston, where the Misses Gee had 'assisted.' It seems strange that this same wedding, between parties as yet unknown to me even by name, has already reached me through another channel. Four or five weeks ago, I met in the course of my ordinary walk along the Queensferry Road a party of gentlemen who challenged me as an acquaintance. I recognised no one of them ; but it turned out to be Messrs. John Blackwood the publisher and James B. the lawyer. Some confused remembrance I had that we were or ought to be in a relation of hostility, though *why* I could ground upon none but fuscous and cloudy reasons. However, as it occurred to me that the belligerent party had never ceased to send me the monthly present of his magazine, naturally the war could not have been conducted in a spirit of *acharnement*. Surprised, however, I was a little at the

marked kindness of their salutation, and I heard with pleasure that Mr. John B., who (as by accident I knew) had some time ago married a young lady (and indistinctly my impression was an Englishwoman), wished to introduce his young wife to Florence and yourself, and proposed accordingly to drive her over to Mavis Bush on any day that should be convenient to you two. Of course, I expressed my own pleasure, and answered for yours, at this prospect, but explained the hindrance which for the present would delay the meeting. Some weeks after this, viz., on Saturday night, July 21, I met on the same road partially the same party: again there were two Blackwoods, only for James the lawyer was substituted Major Blackwood; but again Mr. John was present, and as it happened to be nearly nine o'clock, would peremptorily insist upon my going *instantly* to drink tea with Mrs. J. B. I did so, and found her a very fascinating person as regards manners. She has a charming frankness, and a most winning spirit of kindness in her address. During the hour that I had the pleasure of passing in her company, which was sincerely a *very* pleasant one (for Mrs. B. is constitutionally cheerful and I believe clever), it came out that some recent marriage in Boston had personally interested my hostess. Could I be right in fancying that the name of *Waugh* was in some way associated with the event? Such an impression survived faintly from the remembrances of the evening. We both came to the conclusion that this must be identical with *your* wedding, since (said Mrs. B.) it would be likely to engage the interest of the Miss Gees.

"Last week, viz., on Thursday the 26th of July, I dined by invitation with a small party—*men* only—at Mr. Ritchie's in George Square. Mr. Ritchie* and his family have been very kind in their attentions to me. But, to finish my story of the dinner-party,—on entering the drawing-room, inquiries buzzed about me as to your whereabouts and intentions with regard to the homeward route, &c.; and upon my answering that I had reason to look for you (speaking nautically) '*in all August*,' somebody said, 'We understand, Mr. de Quincey, you are going to lose another of your daughters.' This arose naturally out of a previous inquiry about M. and the chances of her coming over to England; but it took me so far by sur-

* John Ritchie was proprietor of the *Scotsman*.—ED.

prise that I did not know how to treat it, for I was not certain as to F.'s own wishes on this point. However, I said, smiling, that such a rumour was certainly current. 'Aye, but it's more than a rumour,' said Mr. Russel, the editor of the *Scotsman*; and then it came out that on the morning of this very Thursday, a son of Lord Dunfermline, one of the Abercrombies, who is now by accident on a visit to Edinburgh, had announced the news as highly probable. He is our British Minister at Turin; and it had so happened, that when Colonel Baird Smith was studying the system of irrigation in the King of Sardinia's Continental dominions (Piedmont, &c.), he was invited to take up his quarters in the hotel of our English Legation, which he did, and thus became intimately acquainted with Sir Ralph, for I believe that this son of Lord D. is the one known as Sir Ralph A. So that here is at once an end to all further secrecy, if you had any wish for it. On this occasion, by the way, as previously at Mr. J. B.'s, I found all persons loud in the praise of Colonel Baird Smith.

"This day, viz., August 1, *now* at p. 6 (though not on p. 1), I was meaning to transfer myself to Mavis Bush. But so far I have altered my purpose as that I shall not go till to-morrow. But I plan foolishly; for my spirits fail me, and, since I wrote last, through one fortnight I was fearfully ill. To-morrow I will write specially to Florence.—Ever, my dear daughters,—with love to the two ladies your hostesses.

"P.S.—Have I understood you rightly that dear little Eva is coming over?"

In 1855 his second daughter, Florence, went out to India and was married to Colonel Baird Smith, so well known in connection with great engineering works there. And not only distinguished for his achievements in civil engineering. As Sir John Kaye tells,* he was transferred from Roorkee to Delhi at an early period of the siege as engineer-in-chief; he projected the plan of assault, urged it on in opposition to General Sir Archdale Wilson's wishes for delay, and after being wounded and weakened, so that recourse to opium was forced upon him for support, he remained the responsible director of the siege operations till final success was secured. This further

* "History of the Sepoy War," vols. ii. and iii.

inroad on the household at Lasswade only seemed to render De Quincey more concerned for the welfare of all. The next extract will show the impression that the first personal acquaintance with his grandchild Eva produced upon him :—

“42 LOTHIAN STREET, October 1855.

“MY DEAR EMILY,—Do you know, I cannot abide ‘Dred,’ so much, at least, as I have read of ‘Dred,’ which, thank Heaven, is not much. Also, I cannot abide Mr. Aytoun’s ‘Bothwell,’ so much, at least, as I have seen of it, which, thank Heaven, is considerably less.

“Did I tell you what word it was that dear little Eva suggested to me? I was thinking, months ago, what words we English could muster towards balancing the French claim (claim of wealth, I mean, in the vocabulary of *social distinctions*). *Ennui*, upon which the French are so *fiers*, might imperfectly (I thought) be represented by *listlessness*. Here seems the difference :—Listlessness is, perhaps, a purely *passive* state—a mere *effect* or *result* ; whereas, *ennui* has something *causative* about it. *Ennui* might prompt or suggest, but perhaps listlessness only forbears to oppose. So as to some other words. At last I came to Eva’s word, which was *arch* and *archness*. She is the only baby of twelve months old that ever struck me as *arch*. There seems to be between this word *archness* and the justly famous French word *naïveté* a connecting link of apposition. *Naïvete*, or naturalness, or natural spontaneity, always involves *unconsciousness*. But *archness* is thus far opposed, that it includes, necessarily, a certain amount of *conscious* fun.”

In the next letter, addressed to his daughter Emily, he gives at length his opinion on the final form of the “Confessions,” inviting, as was his wont, the deliberate and independent opinion of his daughters on the subject :—

“This was parboiled in departing September ; parboiled in opening October. But, as involving no *personal* limitation to this correspondent or to that, why not transfer it to you? Tuesday and pretty certainly Wednesday being the *last* day of September and *first* of October. Year continuing very much what it was when I wrote last.

“MY DEAR EMILY,—By this complex date I wish you to understand that my epistolary impulses may happen to cruise

about throughout the week, weighing anchor whenever the whim seizes me, and dropping anchor as often as I am seriously interrupted. Hold me excused, therefore, from all continuity or logical coherency. All the reason that I can plead for beginning is that the day happens to be September 30 ; so that, if I do not write now, you will say I have not written this autumn ; since many critical people insist upon ranking October as a winter month. Yet stop ! did not I write early in September ? So absorbed am I by the press, that I forget all things else ; and I forget that—did I write, or did I not ? Volume v. is on the point of closing, viz., 'THE CONFESSIONS.' It is almost rewritten ; and there cannot be much doubt that here and there it is enlivened, and so far improved. To justify the enormous labour it has cost me, most certainly it *ought* to be improved. And yet, reviewing the volume as a *whole*, now that I can look back from nearly the end to the beginning, greatly I doubt whether many readers will not prefer it in its original fragmentary state to its present full-blown development. But if so, why could I not have felt this objection many weeks since, when it would have come in time to save me what has proved an exhausting labour ? The truth is, I *did* feel it ; but what countervailed the objection was secretly the following awkward dilemma :—A doubt had arisen whether, with my own horrible recoil from the labour of converging and unpacking all hoards of MSS., I could count upon bringing together enough of the 'Suspiria' (yet unpublished) materially to enlarge the volume. If not, this volume (standing amongst sister volumes of 320 to 360 pp.) would present only a beggarly amount of 120 pp. Upon which arose this dilemma—Either the volume must be strengthened by the addition of papers altogether alien, which to me was eminently disagreeable, as breaking up the unity of the volume—or else, if left in the slenderness of figure, would really to *my* feeling involve us in an act that looked very like swindling. How could 7s. 6d. be reasonably charged to the public for what obviously was but a third part in bulk of the other volumes ? But could not the price for this anomalous volume have been commensurately lessened ? No. Mr. H., the publisher, who knows, of course, so much more than I do about such cases, assures me that nothing so much annoys the trade as any interruption of the price scale upon a series of volumes. Such being the case, no remedy remained but that I should *doctor* the book, and expand

it into a portliness that might countenance its price. I should, however, be misleading you if any impression were left upon your mind that I had eked out the volume by any wiredrawing process : on the contrary, nothing has been added which did not originally belong to my outline of the work, having been left out chiefly through hurry at the period of first, *i.e.*, original, publication in the autumn of 1821. Do not, therefore, suffer anything I have now said to interfere with reading the book in its recomposition (or, more bookishly, its *rifacimento*) ; for I wish to have the deliberate judgment upon it of Pegsborough, since hereafter it will travel into a popular edition, priced suppose one half-crown instead of three ; and in that edition I can profit by the opinions reported. As a further reason for reading it I must mention, that as a book of *amusement* it is undoubtedly improved ; what I doubt is, whether also as a book to *impress*. Some morning soon you will receive the book through the post-office ; and after *that*, I will plague you no more about it. Meantime this one thing I may add, as guiding you to the notion that I have been fumbling with :—Pope, you know, originally published his ‘Rape of the Lock’ as a mere aërial sketch unencumbered with any machinery ; but afterwards (on better—some think on worse—consideration) he buckramed or crinolined his graceful sketch with an elaborate machinery of gnomes and sylphs derived from the Rosicrucian philosophy. This change stiffened it, but rounded it and made it orbicular. Was it better or worse for this somewhat pompous expansion ? The opinion of the world was unhesitatingly that the new machinery was most felicitous ; and in particular places, I cannot deny that it tells with great effect. Yet, after all, there was in the original sketchy and playful *bagatelle*, with its fragmentary grace and its *impromptu* loveliness, an attraction which has perished in the brocaded massiveness and voluminous draperies of this ceremonial mythology, with its regular manœuvrings and deployings of agencies malicious or benign. We now have a full-blown rose against the original wild rosebud or dewy blossom of the dawn. Such is *my* feeling. Such was Addison’s, and I doubt not his most sincere feeling. Yet the friends of Pope affected to think that so very natural a mode of feeling was in Addison purely hypocritical, and hazarded under the desperate refinement of finessing jealousy—that Pope might be thus misled into sup-

pressing his exquisite little gem of art under its most perfect manifestation. How thoroughly sincere Addison *might* be, I for *my* part read most legibly in my own continual vibration towards the same decision. But what relation has all this to my own case? Simply this—that here again, as in thousands of similar cases, is a conflict—is a call for a choice—between an almost *extempore* effort, having the faults, the carelessness, possibly the graces, of a fugitive inspiration—this on the one side, and on the other a studied and mature presentation of the same thoughts, facts, and feelings, but without the same benefit from extemporaneous excitement. Waal, now, to speak yankeeishly, I calculate your dander is rising against this specimen of dissertationising. But note, this is an exceptional epistle, preparing and warning you for a *practical* question, viz., a thoughtful consideration of the remodelled ‘Confessions’ as more fit, or less fit, under omissions or changes (what and where?), to take its place among works addressing themselves to the *popular* mind. Such a purpose, you will admit, excuses a certain amount of lecturing. However, excusable or not, it is over. As Solomon remarks, the rain is over and gone; and the voice of the turtle, not turtle-soup, is heard in the forests. No more lecturing shall you hear from me. I proceed to ask—are you at all thinking of turning homewards? By the 20th of the next month, or say (as a day more memorable) by the 21st, which is the day of ‘almighty Trafalgar,’ I shall be ready to reinstate myself in our sumptuous mansion of Mavis Bush. When, on or about the 27th (I think it was) of July, I heard from you, not that you were going, but actually that you were going—going—GONE, to that island of saints, first gem of the sea, green Erin,—verily I was struck as by a thunderbolt.

“But why, you will say, hearing of my ‘consternation’ on learning so suddenly your departure for Ireland, had I ever quitted Mavis Bush? *Your* going away would not have necessitated mine. No; but I was satisfied that I never could have carried through the press a remodelled edition of ‘The Confessions’ at that distance from the press; *here* I have done ill enough, followed with such hunter’s speed by the printers, that a quantity of ‘copy,’ which I had been taught to suppose equal to twelve men’s work for at least half a week, came back to me all finished in five hours. But what should I have done at Lasswade? Here, if I send a messenger back, it is but a few hundred steps that he has to retrace and lose. Every time

the same thing happened at Lasswade, there would have been a loss of fifteen miles.

"You never tell me anything of Mr. John Craig, *junior*. But I fear *junior* does not reach the depth of the case; it must be *natu minimus*, youngest, not younger, that will hit the bird I mean. You must understand that the Latin adjective *juvenis* (young) has a comparative degree, *juvenior* (and by contraction *junior*), younger. But very improperly it has no superlative, *juvenissimus*, and by contraction *junissimus*. The word was wanting to these haughty Romans, but not the thing. A youngest member of a family, a younger than a younger, did exist in Roman households, in defiance of old mumbling grammar and old toothless grammarians that suddenly found themselves bankrupt of proper words for expressing 'oldest' and 'youngest.' Once on my hearing a man, who could not carry into the understanding of a woman his very simple question, 'Was the storey in which we stood the topmost in the whole house?' presented his question thus—'Supposing this house turned upside down, should we find ourselves in the cellar?' And so, as there is no proper Latin word for 'youngest,' except the circuitous one of *natu minimus*, and yet the young gentleman aimed at *is* known to me only as youngest or most young, and any merely *junior* person will not answer, then I desire to vary my question thus—Supposing all relations of age to be exactly inverted, and all modes of kinship turned upside down, then understand that I am inquiring about a young gentleman that would in that case become grandfather to a writer on 'Political Economy' in three volumes octavo. That grandfather, aged, I believe, about two and a half months, has he come as yet to the use of his distinguishing faculties? Does he notice any slight differences between a philosopher and a cabbage? And on what terms is he with Miss Eva, who originally, I think, threatened to do for him?"

There is some humour in the manner in which Thucydides figures in the next note in relation to a grandchild; and evidence of a resuscitation of old impulses in his venturing forth in spite of weakness to hear Grisi. But more important than either of these points is the concern that he feels for old friends:—

"I am somewhat weary of Lothian Street. But should Lothian Street spitefully retort that she is weary of me, *that*

happens to be impossible, as I can prove, for she has never seen me. At the end of the penultimate (not the ultimate) week of May 1856, did I, the underwritten, enter upon these Wilsonian rooms or room, out of which stirred have I not into any street or streetlet, once only excepted three or four weeks back, when I went to the theatre for the purpose of seeing and hearing Grisi, and under the impression (which now appears to have been a false impression) that on this planet she would not again be scenically revealed. I entered on this message at a time, say May 24, when as yet little Frank's starry head had not risen by full two months above this world's horizon; two months, I think, and three days: is not that correct? Did little Frank's ear tingle a trifle to-night, I wonder? For, about seven o'clock, I was, though not talking about him, yet reading, or (as superfine ladies in low life are apt to say) I was '*perusing*,' a passage that related exclusively to *him*; and you know the proverb. But *where*, in what record, prophetic or historic, was it that I could find anything to read about Frank? Many books and papers there are lying distractedly up and down the room; but in one of two only could it be, as two and no more were, and are, on the tea-table, viz., Thucydides, and a young lady's letter, this night received; so that by mere coercion of logic, if not in the lady's letter, then Frank must have been mentioned in Thucydides; perhaps on the same page with Pericles, Alcibiades, and the ugly knave Socrates. On making further examination, I find that it was *not* Thucydides who took liberties with Frank Craig's name; not Thucydides to a certainty, but Miss —. She (but unhappily for a curious posterity seeking vainly to solve the mystery—unhappily not in the broad open ocean of her letter, but in the narrow straits where cross currents and ripples—such as these—make the navigation trying and perilous to the best of pilots) speaks first of Eva as a lovely little thing, and then, but by a name looking more like *Hastie* than anything else, she forges off on the other tack to Frank. How Miss — came to write to me at all was thus:—Some five or six weeks back, whilst pursuing my studies in that impassioned journal, *The North British Advertiser*, I saw a notice from a certain indeterminate Miss — (who *might* prove after all to be *our* Miss — you know), inviting all the world in search of artificial flowers to look for them in — Street, where the aforesaid Mesdemoiselles bivouacked. Could it be

that our amiable young friends, who had sustained so many jolts at least of adversity, were reduced even yet lower, and were at last making an effort to earn their daily bread by manufacturing flowers? No, my hope was better; and, according to Sir Andrew Aguecheek's mode of stating the case, my hope was that they were *not* getting their bread. Yet, if, after all, it should turn out that they *were*, how mean a thing it would seem, that precisely with *their* descent should coincide an apparent neglect from us; for I, out of pure inadvertence, had delayed sending a copy of 'The Confessions.' This neglect I immediately caused to be repaired; and then, at his leisure, Mr. Hogg pushed inquiries in all directions, until he ascertained fully that between — Street and — Street was no connection. Meantime Miss — having, through a long period of suffering, been confined to bed, could not acknowledge the book; but to-night, being better, she does; and in that way it happens that to *her* was granted an opportunity, which to that benighted reprobate, Thucydides, was not, and at this time of day probably never will be granted, of enlarging upon the dawning beauty of my dear little grandson."

Nothing that was passing in the world without escaped him, or was without interest to him, as many little references must already have suggested. In all matters that moved the public feeling, awe-inspiring murder-trials not excepted, his interest was keen, and many of his letters communicate his ideas on *causes célèbres*. The two following letters addressed to his daughter Emily present some of his theories on the notorious Palmer case:—

"Wednesday, June 18, 1856.

"MY DEAR EMILY,—Odd it is that, just at the moment when I was looking for a pen, that the clock striking 3 P.M., in order to let you know that on or about Monday (it may be Tuesday) next, I was planning to come over for a week or ten days, your letter was delivered to me.

"One thing I wish exceedingly, which is, that you would write to the 'Captain' of the Manchester Grammar School, explaining that nothing but nervous unhappiness had hindered my long ago writing, and that at present I waited only for the finishing of the fifth vol. to send off the whole set. Do you remember the Captain's address? The name, I think, is Taylor.

"As to Palmer, and the question you put, I (like other

people) am more perplexed as the case unfolds its unintelligibilities. Never for one moment have I doubted Palmer's guilt. And until he, manifestly desiring to benefit by a quibble, said, 'Cooke did not die' (or 'was not poisoned') 'by strychnia,' I (like all others) held as a matter of certainty that the murderer and the mode of murder were equally manifested. Since Saturday last, however (when in second and third editions of the *Scotsman* and the *Express* I read telegraphic accounts of the execution), I have been shaken in that opinion. For manifestly Palmer, like many other obtuse and callous criminals, wished (and fancied it possible with advantage in two worlds) to equivocate and play the Jesuit with his own conscience. He fancied it possible to benefit in a ghostly world by adhering to the *literal* truth, whilst in the present world he benefited by what was *virtually* a falsehood, conveying a false impression, but verbally might be true. 'I did not kill (or did not poison) Cooke by strychnia.' 'But did you by any other poison?' To that question he refused any answer. Now if we suppose him prepared for general and unconditional mendacity, why should he have recoiled from that searching and comprehensive question? After this I felt myself compelled to hesitate about the strychnia. But in that case, you will say, what becomes of the remarkable evidence given by Newton, and the undeniable fact that he *surprised* Palmer in the very act of purchasing a large quantity of strychnia? We must suppose that the purchase, and generally the clandestine circumstances which surrounded the purchase, had been all prearranged for effect by Palmer, though this one incident of the surprise could not have been arranged. But with what purpose? Expressly with the purpose of misleading the public mind, and throwing it upon a false scent. Especially the *medical* public, he assured himself, would be so preoccupied with this belief, as to search singly for strychnia; yet, as they found none, on this issue he staked his own almost certain escape. Unfortunately for him, the external symptoms so strangely corresponded to those ascribed by repute (one can scarcely say *traditionally* ascribed) to strychnia, and secondly, those supposed confirmatory symptoms (the jerking of the arms, the screams, the arching of the body) so unhappily coincided with the hypothesis of Dr. Taylor as to the possible absorption (and in that way the disappearance) of the strychnia, that his own reliance on the apparent absence of the poison utterly failed

him. In fact, the very *non*-appearance of the strychnia under Dr. Taylor's notions told *against* him. Under this view of the case, it still remains as a most remarkable coincidence that Newton's *surprising* him, the very thing he must have wished for, should really have occurred. And yet, though a most singular coincidence, it is on the other hand equally unaccountable (or at least marvellous) on the counter view of the case—viz., that Palmer was seriously and *bonâ fide* purchasing strychnia for the purpose imputed to him. But as to Newton's evidence in particular, I heard from a gentleman, formerly secretary to Canning when Prime Minister, a remarkable anecdote, derived immediately from L—— C——, on the night of Thursday last, June 12, which to-morrow I will tell you. At present the fiend is looking over my shoulder from the press of No. 18 St. Andrew's Square. To-day is Waterloo. Love to the Widnells.—Ever, my dear Emily, yours affectionately.”

“Thursday, June 26, 1856.

“MY DEAR EMILY,—My last letter, written (if I do not mistake) on this day week, should have had a successor treading on its heels. I had promised this expressly; and, secondly, an unfinished letter seems virtually to *imply* such a promise. What I had left unfinished was that part of Palmer's case which rested on the questionable conduct of Newton. This has been in some measure accounted for by the story reported (as I mentioned to you) to the ex-secretary of the late Mr. C——. I had it from *him*, the ex-secretary. He had it from ——, who would be most savage if I should call him *a* Colonel F. Thirdly, this Colonel F. (whether *a* or *the*) had it directly from ——, one of the three judges who presided at Palmer's trial. Perhaps you are aware that the difficulty besetting Newton's evidence was this—why had he kept it back for months, and come forward at last only on the very eve of the trial? It could not be alleged that for this conduct there existed any motive of interest apparent or conceivable; still it wore an air of mystery. But by Colonel F.'s story this was plausibly (or at least endurably) accounted for. Newton immediately after the trial took the step (in *his* case a proper one and a bold one if he knew his own intentions to have been upright) of personally waiting upon, and offering an explanation of his conduct. Accident had made him acquainted from the very first with the *second* purchase of strychnia by

Palmer ; and the previous purchase *of course* he knew, having himself been the seller. But this second purchase rather tended to disperse than to strengthen the suspicions against Palmer. In fact, the very magnitude of the quantity—six grains, when barely half a grain rightly managed was a dose fatally sufficient for an adult—naturally turned his suspicions into a different channel—not any human being, but a *horse*, occurred to him as the probable object of Palmer's poisoning enterprise. We must all admit that in the case of Palmer (a man dedicated through life to horse-racing and systematic betting upon horses), this silent interpretation of the case by Newton was a most reasonable one. Oftentimes it happens, through the complex betting which takes place, that the winning of a race by one particular horse will make a difference to the people interested against him of very ruinous sums. A sudden and enormous temptation is thus created, sometimes within a single hour, by changes in the aspect of the chances, for '*nobbling*' the horse—such is the technical term ; that is, for getting into his stable by tampering with one of his grooms, trainers, or perhaps his rider, and either killing him outright, or (where it is possible) disabling him for the coming trial. But is not this a scandalous roguery ? Certainly it is, and in strict discharge of his duty Newton ought to have published his suspicions and their grounds, or at any rate he should have made them known in the quarter likely to be specially affected by them. All this is true ; but still it is easy to understand the excuse pleaded by Newton to Lord Campbell as natural and even entitled to considerable indulgence, viz., that he, as an old neighbour and acquaintance of Palmer's, could not reconcile himself to the idea of pointing the thunderbolt which must probably carry ruin simultaneously to his character and his fortune. This explanation, to my thinking, is natural and intelligible,[§] and exhibits Newton in the venial light of a man whose principles were simply not very tightly braced, so that he listened to the claims of good nature rather than of severe justice.

"To your remark that it would have been more satisfactory, however much the case was able to dispense with such a proof, nevertheless that a distinct proof should have been obtained of strychnia lurking in the organs (all or some) of poor, ill-fated Cooke, I assent thus far, that I think the absence of such proof matter of deep regret ; but I do not admit that such an ab-

sence, under the withering hailstorm of circumstantialities, every one of which told with killing effect against Palmer, should have availed in the least, or have counted for so much as a drop against an ocean, in discussing the propriety of enforcing the sentence. I say this with a reference to *future* cases, since any indulgence granted to *him* must have been extended to all future poisoners. Yet on such terms the hands of justice would be paralysed. It will often be impossible (for varying reasons) to show the poison, whilst the poison-inflicted death may be apparent as sun and moon. It is on the same consideration that I would discourage all efforts too earnest for extracting a confession. Otherwise the inevitable recoil will be towards a favourable view of the criminal's case where (through obstinacy or through policy) he has *not* confessed. If once we come to regard confession as the counter-seal of the judicial award and sentence, convicts will not be slow in acting upon that prejudice of the public mind ; some clergymen, I fear, will co-operate with that obstinacy in the felon ; and, in the absence of confession, the case will be held to want its most solemn ratification. I would say habitually to such criminals—For your own peace of mind, I counsel you to confess. Else, for the satisfaction of public justice, we need it not, and, except in pity for you, we should be careless whether you confess or not.

“I have been writing with great energy ; partly in consequence of this, have been dreadfully shattered for the last ten days. Every day I have been on the wing for Mavis Bush ; this the urgency of the press, which pursued me at the heels up to 11 A.M. of yesterday, made next to impossible. But now I am so preparing things, that to a *certainly* on Tuesday evening of next week, or on the following morning, I shall be at home for say ten days.

“For dear little Eva I have been ransacking a dreadful book, viz., ‘Lake Ngami.’ Dreadful are its records, in which, above all, figures the black rhinoceros ; and dreadful are its pictorial illustrations. I want you to walk three and a half miles with me every non-rainy morning. *Can* you do it? Love to my fair young friends at The Elms.”

Once again he is under the necessity of asking his daughter Emily, who had gone on a visit, to return home :—

" *Thursday Night, November 6, 1856, begun.*

"Now, my dear Emily, the time is close at hand when, if you are quite disentangled from engagements, I should feel greatly obliged by your coming home. Yet stop! not too soon: pause for a few days, and for the following reason. Several, to wit two (if not three), long letters—one, I think, dated two months ago—were written by me to yourself and to Mr. Craig. Unfortunately they both fell into a pile of papers, from which I never could extricate them without more serious trouble than the press labours would allow me. To-morrow, or maybe to-night, I shall find them. But now, if you were to come away too suddenly, to whom could I send them? These elaborate letters will, in that case, want a reader, which is dreadful. So to a certainty I will send two at least to-morrow or by Sunday. Would you believe it? Not until yesterday, viz., Wednesday, November 5, the clock then striking *four* P.M., did I write the last correction on the last proof, viz., the Prefatory Notice of the new 'Confessions.' All last night, and I presume all this day, the machine (so I believe they call the last new invention for throwing off copies rapidly) has been at work; and one single copy, wanting the Prefatory Notice, was sent off to London upon Tuesday night, November 4th, for the purpose of being what is technically called *subscribed*. I shall await with some little anxiety the result. For this residence in Edinburgh has for some time been trying to me. I do hope it has put something into your purse, for it has taken a good deal out of mine. Twenty and four weeks already I have been here. Inexplicable it seems that I can have spent so much time on the *recast* (for such it is, not simply a revision) of this little book. I will have it sent to M. to-morrow. I wrote a long letter to M. about Froude and the sixteenth century; and, moreover, in the Appendix to the 'Confessions,' introduced a little anecdote about M. when under two, and Barbara Lewthwaite, which it is likely enough she never heard.

"Seven weeks ago come Sunday next—so at least I calculate—I woke in high delirium. No apparent cause could be assigned; but so it was. Mrs. Wilson and her sister, greatly alarmed, summoned Mr. Hogg out of church, who summoned Dr. Burn. In two days I was well again. But I am still persuaded, and have been for a long time, that without some

daily exercise I shall not weather many months ; else through continual temperance I am well enough.

"Did you see the last *Athenæum*, which contains a flattering notice of Colonel Baird Smith, and connects it in the beginning with a most reasonable protest against a scoundrel doctrine that has been often repeated, to this following effect : viz., that if we British, the present rulers of Hindostan, should retire from it by choice or under compulsion, in that case no memorial would survive of our past rule except a large heap of empty champagne bottles. The *Athenæum* it is not which throws the doctrine into this lively expression, but I have seen it so expressed. It is singular that I had just begun a short paper putting the villainy and ignobility of this sentiment into a conspicuous light. For it is clear that, with the patronisers of this opinion, to raise magnificent tanks, like Akbar and Aurungzebe, or to plant 2000 milestones from the Bay of Bengal to the banks of the Indus—that is the only service worth speaking of ; but that to make justice accessible to every rank (which in tendency, at least, and by intention we have done), and to shield a hundred and twenty millions of people from outrages such as those of the Pindarris or the Mahrattas—this is nothing.

"On Tuesday night, in theory for half-an-hour, but practically it came to nearly four hours, I went in upon a visit to my opposite neighbours, the W.s. The Doctor head of the house, who has a son in the artillery, and is a very kind and worthy man, had previously twice called upon me ; else I had seen none of the family. The mother is ladylike. The sole daughter, I believe about seventeen, is really a very charming girl, so far as candlelight will permit me to judge. About three weeks ago, when Dr. and Mrs. W. had gone to St. Andrews with the view of obtaining (which he *did* obtain) a full-blown doctor's degree, there remained behind the daughter and her maternal aunt, a Miss W., said to be a splendid beauty although counting more years than forty. One night soon after the departure of the senior W.s, Miss W. and her niece went to an evening party at Dr. B.'s, somewhere in the New Town. Being late, they went upstairs at a hurried pace, and on reaching the centre of the drawing-room, Miss W. suddenly fell forward and broke a blood-vessel. My informant (my landlady's sister) assured me that a perfect deluge of blood had—such was her housewifely idea—ruined the *fine carpet*.

Naturally for some days Miss W. staid at the house ; then returning hither, and being attended by Dr. B., in ten days she was fully re-established, to my great astonishment, and has since departed on a visit to Perthshire ; whilst the carpet, I grieve to say, has a very small chance of visiting the Highlands. My visit on Tuesday was an agreeable one. A Dr. W. was there, who had lived much in India, and had done *me* the honour to watch my literary career with interest for thirty-five years. Consequently, besides some excellent coffee, I personally came in for a good deal of pleasant flattery. Last night I was invited for another visit to the W.s, which interrupted this letter, and will, I suppose, shove onwards, by one additional day, all my future acts or sayings. Consequently, the almanack of my remaining life shows clearly that the letters meant for Friday's task must fall on a Saturday ; and one, meant for M., as work for Saturday, will therefore fall on Sunday. Mrs. W. knew in former days Lady Byron, *i.e.* (as you will suppose), Miss Milbanke. And, what surprises me greatly, Mrs. W. reports that she had no pretensions whatever to beauty, but was, she says, very amiable and high-principled. With respect, by the way, to 'the deluge of blood,' which surprised me so much when taken in combination with Miss W.'s speedy restoration to *travelling* strength, I observe (p. 245, vol. i. of her 'Memoirs') that Lady Hester Stanhope, that most odious of Pagan women, describes herself as having on 'several' occasions 'vomited blood enough to have killed a horse ;' and in a letter dated August 21, 1836, she says—'With the blood running out of my mouth, I was collected enough to give orders,' &c. So, perhaps (only that Lady Hester was a dreadful fibber), my surprise was the surprise of ignorance. Love to all and some. Ever most affectionately yours."

The question of grammar or no grammar for ladies occupies his consideration ; and the following letter, addressed to his daughter Margaret in November 1856, is, we think, full of character and originality :—

"Some years ago, you and Florence were inclined to be-moan your supposed misfortune in not having regularly studied English grammar, or, which probably was running in your thoughts, *universal* (what is sometimes called *philosophic*) grammar, under some able governess. With your regrets I sympathised not at all. Why not ? Simply on the following

grounds. If the final purpose with you and Florence had been purely a *practical* purpose—viz., the obtaining a more absolute command over your mother tongue—in that case, and in all corresponding cases, my conviction is that exercise, practice, chattering, rattling away ‘hitty-missy,’ right or wrong, along the line of ninety-one times twenty-four hours, *i.e.*, through three months right ‘on end’ (an old English phrase for our modern philosophic term ‘continuously’), there and in that lies the true royal road to correct speaking. All those that, like Lord Bristol’s son in the period of Cromwell, have ever arrived at an exquisite vernacular familiarity with the pure racy Castilian, were people surrounded in the very cradle with genuine *Madrilenas*, nurses or duennas of Madrid. Now the English analogon to all this, the corresponding advantage for an English young lady, is daily communication with persons belonging to good society. This I say on the assumption that your wishes had been pointed simply to the attainment of elegant ladylike English; consequently your regrets, if any, to the *failure* in that object.

“Therefore, I say, as the sum of all this rigmarole, that so far as your united moan (yours and Florence’s) applied itself to grammar as a practical and usable thing, grammar you had, and in all conscience enough. For that woman who does by mere imitation, base mimicry, succeed in speaking pure English, and without knowing the reason why, or being able to assign any principle upon which she prefers the right form which she adopts to the false form which she rejects—that woman, I say, is right enough; and if a subscription is made for her, and it should begin in Tipperary, put down my name at once for half-a-crown, notwithstanding that her virtuous doings are supposed to rest upon suspicious grounds. But, if she talks with as much purity as the affable Archangel, then what I say is, the affable Archangel himself, though he were fifty Raphaels, could do no more. What more, then, was it, my dear girls, that you were subterraneously seeking? What better bread than is made (supposing the astonishing case that any bread really *is* made) of wheat? What more extra-super-fine talk than is offered for his Sunday’s best by the affable Archangel Raphael?

“Shall I guess? I believe that—I fancy that—I will suggest that you were both seeking by a metaphysical instinct, sometimes were consciously seeking, oftener perhaps subcon-

sciously (and confounding it with your kindred but subordinate study of *English* grammar), were both seeking the fine and subtle threads of philosophical grammar, that subject which first was taught to grow and prosper in an English atmosphere by Harris, the same whose son, Lord Malmesbury, subsequently figured in British diplomacy, and made us a present of the angelic Caroline of Wales.

"Now, then, having through much floundering reached this subject, upon this I wish to prose—The book, at least the leading book of Harris upon this subject, is called 'Harris's Hermes.' Hermes (in Greek 'Ερμης) means the Roman god Mercury—the Interpreter by means of speech. In this book Harris discusses such questions as, Why do we say *she* of a ship? why *he* if the ship be an enemy? why *she* of moral qualities—fortitude, patience, virtue, &c.? Why, again, *he* of the sun, and *she* of the moon? Oddly enough, however, as perhaps you know, the Germans reverse this: the moon is *der* Mond—*Squire* moon; the sun is *Miss* sun—viz., *die* Sonne.

<i>Masc.</i>	<i>Fem.</i>	<i>Neut.</i>
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Der	Die	Das (our article <i>the</i>).
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"Well, now, this article *the* furnishes a large field for the circumgyrations of philosophical grammar. Generally, you know, in ordinary English grammars it is said that *the* most intensely individualises, whilst *a* generalises. For instance, 'If a beggar comes, give him a penny,'—that is, any beggar whatsoever—any penny. But if you had said, 'I met the beggar to-day, and told him what you said,' at once you are understood to speak of a known individual beggar. True, that is one use of *the*, but that will not justify us in characterising this article as the individualising article, the *definite* article, as it is called (anti-thetically to *a*) in all grammars; for it is also intensely the generalising article—e.g., 'The moralist may say what he will, but the statesman will reply;' 'As yet Australia has accumulated no records: the historian or the biographer is hardly wanted.' Or again, 'The soldier tired of war's alarms;' i.e., not any special or individual soldier, but universally all soldiers, every soldier. Now, is it not strange that this great function of *the* never yet, according to my experience, has been publicly noticed? Well, another case of the same nature unexpectedly offers itself at this moment—for, as I write, *a* clock (or at least amongst the vast household of clocks, *some* clock) gives warning that, if in the Scottish expression it should be

'spared,' very soon it will publish a correct edition of a valuable truth, viz., that it is five o'clock ; and so I must pull up sharp. Now here, I might mean by '*a* clock' a particular clock known to you and me—a special clock, conventionally understood between us—or, in the very opposite sense (as in fact I *did* mean), any clock, any possible specimen of that genus whose office is to measure the motion of time, and to call aloud its subdivisions. In the prior use of *a* it individualises ; in the latter, surely not.

! "A copy of the 'Confessions' was sent to you on Tuesday ; it was the earliest that could be made ready. Criticise furiously and without mercy. The next will be the *final* edition, far different and far better. I am weary to death by my six months' exertion. Surely, whatever blots I may have left, in some things I *must* have improved the book."

He is led to discuss the question of the originality of Plato's doctrine of immortality by his daughter Margaret communicating to him the mistaken views of a "very clever woman," whom he thus sets right on that great topic:—

"MY DEAR MARGARET,—The female friend whom you describe as so clever, and even philosophic, I have no doubt really is so ; and I am glad of it, because it requires some little philosophy to bear being told, what in this case, as an honest man, I am *obliged* to tell your friend—that she is memorably and doubly in the wrong—wrong in supposing Plato by any vestige, shadow, or fraction of an idea entitled in this case to the credit of originality—wrong even more conspicuously in supposing Wordsworth *not* entitled to that credit. So it is, and long since, a settled case amongst all the schools of Christendom, that Plato was as far astray upon this question of *immortality* as it is well possible to be. What little he offered on this subject that ever struck any man as novel was not true, if it were *his*—was not *his*, if it were true. And me it vexes in a degree not easily described, that, by reason of this wretched Plato's criminal blunders, here am I, on a rainy night (Saturday, May 27), with wheat at four guineas a quarter, having some to buy and none to sell, under a present necessity of almost affronting the lady whom, by your account of her accomplishments, so much I could have wished to flatter. Necessity, however, has no law ; and without preface I come to business.

"The lady says, 'I have found it at last, entombed ages back

amidst the thoughts of the great immortal Plato.' Found *it* ! Found *what* ? Apparently, if I understand the case, what she has found is the general idea of immortality as a possible attribute of the human soul. But surely, if Wordsworth's originality were supposed for one moment to depend upon his having first suggested such a doctrine, the immortal Plato's originality would be quite as much at stake. No man could be arrogant enough and silly enough to claim any such originality. Coeval with human nature, twin-born with man himself, must have been the belief in man's immortality. Neither in his own person, nor through his disciples, did Plato ever dream of advancing so preposterous a pretension as that of having first suggested a privilege of immortality for the human soul. What Plato claimed was, that for this old, old doctrine—old probably as the stars—he first had alleged particular arguments. Not the doctrine, but the proof of the doctrine—not the hypothesis, but the presumptions in support of that hypothesis—offered the field upon which any originality could be claimed either for Plato or for Wordsworth. As regards the mere naked doctrine, that the soul of man might probably be immortal, any pretence to having originated this would have been not less ridiculous in Plato than in Wordsworth. Ages before either, the idea and the aspiration must have been as familiar to the speculations of the philosopher, and to the hopes of the ordinary working man, as it is at this day. Difference thus far there could have been none between Wordsworth and Plato. To this extent they stood upon the same identical level.

“Now, then, having cleared the ground of preliminary misconceptions, let us ask at what point commenced the differences which divides them ? Wordsworth, not less than Plato, gave his sanction to the doctrine that the human soul revealed signs and promises of an immortal destiny. But upon what arguments ? Upon arguments, I reply, so thoroughly different, that neither of the two, supposing them for a moment to have been contemporaries, could by possibility be imagined to have borrowed anything from the other. In relation to each other they are both equally original. This reciprocal originality meantime would not interfere with the possibility that each might have borrowed from other quarters. In that respect, therefore, how does the truth stand ? To all appearance it stands thus—Plato, in his famous Dialogue (*Phædo*), amongst various plausibilities more or less conjectural in behalf of this

great doctrine, offers one solitary argument, that to many loose thinkers has worn the semblance of logical proof. By all philosophers of eminence it has been denounced, however, as hollow and unsound ; and supposing it better than it really is, I have no doubt whatever that it could not have been in any absolute sense the argument of Plato ; for, considering the physics and the rude chemistry of the Platonic age, it is manifestly an argument that must have occurred to thousands. On the other hand, Wordsworth has brought forward two separate arguments which yield strong presumptions in favour of the great doctrine, and of these both are evidently original. I say *that*, because no trace of either is to be found in any author whatever, ancient or modern.

“I have said that Plato’s argument is rejected as worthless by all profound thinkers. But it is no practice of mine to rely upon blank authorities. By very much I prefer to any allegation of this man’s opinion or that man’s opinion upon an argument the very argument itself, served up (like John the Baptist’s head) on a charger. Briefly, then, what *is* the little argument of Plato ? It is this—the ancients had a rude notion that the destruction of a thing was representable only as a process of separation amongst its elements. If the thing were formed by composition from A, B, C, then by an inverse process of decomposition, by separating from each other those elements A and B and C, it would perish. Wherever there was a synthesis, regressively there might be a corresponding analysis. But how if there were no synthesis, no composition ? In that case there could be no resolution. If the substance of a thing were not any result from the cohesion of factors radically different, in that case there could be no decomposition. Vainly would you seek to destroy by separating the cohesive parts, if there were no such parts to separate. A substance perfectly homogeneous, they fancied, was liable to no corruption. Heterogeneity it was that made an opening for destruction. Now, in consciousness, and therefore in the human soul as the organ of consciousness, they fancied such a homogeneity. The unity of its substance they fancied to be complete, and consequently its indiscerptibility or non-liability to violent separation. It was, therefore, by its very texture indestructible, as involving no heterogeneous elements.”

It is to be regretted that the rest of this letter is so

mutilated as to be undecipherable. The following letter has a more than ordinary value on account of the clear law which it lays down respecting the legitimacy of suggested readings on the text of classic authors. Besides, it affords an evidence of the way in which he sought to interest his family in everything that he was interested in :—

“MY DEAR MARGARET,—I believe you would not understand the particular object which I had in sending you that couple of leaves detached from the *United Church Journal* for September 1856. The fact is, that if in this world I ever hit the *bull's-eye* (is not *that* the technical expression for the very centre of the centre on a target?), it was in my conjectural restoration of that much litigated passage, so senseless as it now stands, in the ‘Domitian’ of Suetonius. Now the critic in the *Church Journal* resists my emendation on the ground that the present reading is quite satisfactory. Assuredly I shall not leave him in his dream ; at the first leisure moment I shall awaken him ; and as I wish you to understand the grounds of my argument, it became necessary to furnish you with his objections. For itself, the question must naturally have little interest for you ; yet *any* enigma that has tortured men’s wits for two hundred and fifty years must a little stimulate the curiosity of all people that extend a liberal *breadth* of interest to past fields of literary puzzles or conundrums. In Somersetshire they have whole acres devoted to the culture of *teazles*, which are things that the makers of woollen cloth use for *teasing* the cloth in some stage of its manufacture. *Why* and *wherefore*, it is surely *their* business to explain, and not mine. Now, these puzzles that arise from disturbed and dislocated words or letters may be called *teazles*, as standing in something the same relation to the wits and conjectural faculties of scholars that *teazles* do to broadcloth. The peculiar felicity of any emendation lies in this : that the vestiges of the true and recovered reading shall be clearly traceable in a natural corruption of this reading, such as we find it in the existing text. Any man can suggest a reading that will make plausible sense, but the thing demanded is to show how this true reading might easily and naturally fall into the corrupt form now occupying the text. Many are the passages, past counting are the passages, that in Shakespeare are waiting for this felicitous surgery. Some of these, I hope,

rely upon *my* aid ; but never can I hope for a case of so much *luck* as this in Suetonius.

“ Last night I was at a party ; it was a tea-party given by my new friends Dr. and Mrs. W——. Present, Mrs. G——, wife of Dr. G——, one of the Edinburgh Professors, and notorious for his evangelicality—she and some grand-daughters ; also a Mrs. H——, with, I think, three daughters. Mama and one of the daughters I talked with, and thought them very agreeable. They told me that, although Scotch by descent, they held themselves to be English. Dr. W——, a Bengal man, very amiable. There was also a young man, son of a banker, qualifying for the Bar, apparently agreeable, but chiefly noticeable as being so tall that you would naturally measure him by *toises* (*Anglice*, fathoms of six feet) rather than lesser sub-dimensions. I had the honour to be the central figure in this party, the avowed object of it having been to present me to Dr. and Mrs. W——’s select friends. I wore a scarlet coat—no, by the way, it was brown ; salmon-coloured trousers—no, on consideration, they were grey ; buff waistcoat ; a beard of six months’ growth, which has won so general an approbation that I am shy of mowing it. I also sported a new pocket-handkerchief of the finest texture that the looms of Cashmere could produce. Briefly, it is not for miserable prose, but for poetry alone, to describe the brilliancy of my costume.”

In the next note, to his daughter Emily, he intimates his intense anxiety respecting India and the fate of his daughter Florence—Mrs. Baird Smith :—

“ *Monday, June 29, 1857.*

“ MY DEAR EMILY,—You doubtless are suffering under the same anxiety as myself about our poor dear Florence. Let me tell you all that *I* know, then do you write as soon as possible to tell me all that *you* know. Yesterday (that is, Sunday, late in the evening) by pure accident Miss Stark came and asked me if I knew that late on Saturday there had been an important second or third edition published of the *Scotsman*. The *Daily Scotsman* is the particular paper which I take in ; and on Saturday before eight in the morning I had received it as usual. At that hour there was no news stirring ; but now it seemed something was wrong. *About China* Miss Stark thought. But I, upon occasion of the still to this hour unexplained and mysterious mutiny in the Native 34th Regiment, had a mis-

giving that it would be India. With great difficulty, day being Sunday, a copy of the Saturday night edition was obtained; and it then appeared that India it was. Three regiments at Meerut had mutinied—1 cavalry, 2 infantry; they had been attacked by our British regiments; beaten, but able to retreat upon Delhi, where (the Marseilles report was) they had massacred all *white* people.

“All this you have heard, no doubt. Now tell me Colonel Baird Smith’s last station; how is it named? But above all, how is it situated? Surely not on the route from Meerut to Delhi?”

“What I have *since* seen—viz., on this Monday—is an article in the *Daily News* (London paper) from its correspondent, not at Marseilles, but at Trieste. This article says that the Mutiny had also broken out at Ferozepore (Fred’s station, is it not?); two native regiments being specified as amongst the mutineers—viz., the 45th and 57th. But in the action which ensued between the revolvers and the British, the Trieste report went on to say that the 10th (Native) Cavalry maintained their allegiance, and that in consequence the mutineers were ‘broken and dispersed.’ At *that* station the tide had evidently turned, for the 57th were surrendering their arms.

“It is certain, as in all such cases, that everything will have been dreadfully exaggerated; and, as one example of this, from Delhi the assurance was that the massacre of the British had been universal and indiscriminating; but *now*, though so little time has elapsed, this horrid butchery is reduced to ‘*eleven*’ officers killed.

“So I hope for more cheerful accounts. But what insanity is it that has governed our Indian administrators, if, knowing causes of fierce irritation amongst the Sepoys, they have persisted in lazily neglecting them, and suffering such perilous discontents to ferment in extensive camps?—Yours affectionately,
T. DE Q.”

The following letter soon passes into the same absorbing subject:—

“*Sunday, November 1, 1857,*

“MY DEAR EMILY,—On Tuesday (was it not?) your letter reached me; Tuesday *last*, not next Tuesday; for which I am much obliged to you, as also for reading ‘Dr. Parr.’ By the way, my next volume contains another biographic article, viz.,

'Richard Bentley,' which you would oblige me by reading. And on this principle it is worth reading—that he *was* all which Parr pretended to be; the very prince of scholars, who has given to England in this department the very same unapproachable supremacy which she enjoys in so many other departments. It happens also, most appropriately to any comparison of him with Parr, that he (like Parr) filled a conspicuous station in the Church of England—and with what result? Even the sycophants of P. did not pretend that any one of his huge '*Spital Sermons*' had rendered any appreciable service to 1. Religion; 2. Theology; 3. The Church which paid him, as against the Dissenters whose shoes he licked and polished *gratis*. But as to Bentley, who sat in the chair of our present justly renowned Whewell, and had the burthensome cares of that great office (Mastership of Trinity, Cambridge) upon his shoulders through forty years—the space of time for which the children of Israel wandered unprofitably in the wilderness,—*he* preached the lecture founded by the illustrious Robert Boyle at least through two annual courses, and left behind him, if nothing else, the immortal service of smashing for ever and ever that resounding argument against Christianity which founds itself upon the allegation (a true allegation) that the text of the New Testament rocked unsteadily under a load of thirty thousand various readings (since then greatly enlarged); the inference from which, urged spitefully by free-thinkers, was, that the Christian doctrines must be liable to thirty thousand doubts or varieties of interpretation. This argument, by a close and stern review, B. *so* floored, that, throughout a flight of one hundred and sixty years,* it has never again looked up. Now I should be glad to see any similar feat traced to that Brummagem generation of *vipers*, or (as some copies read) of *viparrs*, which once infested the little village sheepfold of Hatton. I will not trouble you further with any egotism about my own vol. vii. except to say:—

"1. That it will soon be afloat, having already reached (as regards the printing) some page *ahead* of p. 270.

"2. That two at least, but I think three, of the six volumes already published have *silently* gone into second editions.

"3. That the London publishers, Messrs. Groombridge, say, that, as the collection advances, the volumes show a tendency to sell more rapidly, and that they are aware of many book-

* First *published* (i.e., *preached*, not printed), I believe, in 1696–97.

buyers and book-clubs waiting for the close of the collection before they purchase.

"INDIA.—Up to the *last mail but one* (or briefly, in its Latin form, up to the penultimate mail), I suffered in my nervous system to an extent that (except once in 1812) had not experimentally been made known to me as a possibility. Every night, oftentimes all night long, I had the same dream—a vision of children, most of them infants, but not all, the *first* rank being girls of five and six years old, who were standing in the air outside, but so as to touch the window; and I heard, or perhaps fancied that I heard, always the same dreadful word, *Delhi*, not then knowing that a word even more dreadful—Cawnpore—was still in arrear. This fierce shake to my nerves caused almost from the beginning a new symptom to expose itself (of which previously I had never had the faintest outline), viz., somnambulism; and now every night, to my great alarm, I wake up to find myself at the window, which is sixteen feet from the nearest side of the bed. The horror was unspeakable from the hell-dog Nena or Nana; how if this fiend should get hold of Florence and her baby (now within seventeen days of completing her half-year)? What first give me any relief was a good firm-toned letter dated *Rourkee* in the public journals, from which it was plain that *Rourkee* had found itself able to act *aggressively*."

To a neighbour's daughter he conveys his impressions of the trial of Madeline Smith, which produced such an unprecedented interest in Scotland:—

"*Wednesday, July 8.*

"MY DEAR MISS WIDNELL,—Every day for a fortnight back I have been on the brink of writing to you; and since Monday week, *i.e.*, since the calamitous Bengal news, with one motive more than usual for seeking to engage your special attention. First, however, let me speak to what at this moment engages my own immediate attention, viz., the morning's wet newspaper now lying on my breakfast-table. This newspaper is the *Daily Scotsman* for Wednesday, July 8, so perhaps you have seen it, containing the speech against Miss Madeline Smith delivered yesterday by the Lord Advocate. Fortunately for justice, the other side will be heard to-day, and there is a reasonable hope that the Dean of Faculty may find it possible to efface the impression left upon the minds of the jury, or at

the least to re-establish something like an equilibrium of favour between the parties.

"To me it seems that from the very first Miss Smith has been cruelly treated. Never in the world was a young woman summoned to face an agony so frightful as that of *hearing* her letters read in an assembly of men and boys—oftentimes coarse, brutal, scoffing—and read for what purpose? This is what I vainly seek to hear explained. How is such a charge as that against her affected for the better or the worse by the tone or the phraseology of her letters? This way or that, the letters on the one side, the indictment on the other, cannot surely be held to have any the very slightest connection. It is very possible that I, reading hurriedly, have missed some clause in the reasoning of the court which may have established a *nexus* * between them; else I should be warranted in asserting that there is none. Or *if* any, only this,—which surely looks too subtle and fantastic to estimate, in the remotest degree to appreciate—that refrigeration and almost unnatural revulsion in Miss Madeline's feelings towards M. L'Angellier which could be supposed capable of listening to any whisper that suggested his death by poison. You must have actually read, experimentally you must have felt, the unfathomable depth which divides the two sets of letters. The transition, it may be said, from the one set to the other is necessary for comprehending the final state of desperation in Miss Smith; and that state of desperation is necessary for comprehending (is a *conditio sine qua non*—[Pupil, consult your dictionary !]), for feeling and realising the last resource of murderous violence. It is, in short, as a key to the strange altered character of Miss Smith's feelings that the concurrent alteration in the style of her letters is appealed to.

"I am growing wearisome, but I use so many words only because I feel that such procedure could scarcely be justified by any *conceivable* advantages resulting to the course of public justice, whilst the *actual* advantages in the present case are really none at all; but, even when measured by the Lord Advocate, are miserably incommensurate to the public outrage thus *judicially* sanctioned. That question, however, is past and gone, the outrage has been tolerated, the suffering from

* "*Nexus*: All Latin words, since you either are or are to be my Latin pupil, I feel it a stern duty to leave untranslated.

the exposure has been drunk off; and now comes another stage of dreadful expectation, pervading all ranks alike; for the public interest runs higher by far than in any case that ever I heard of. What terrifies everybody is the audacious tone of the Lord Advocate, so confident (almost, I should say, exultingly confident) of winning the game against Miss Smith. Here are a few specimens of his equity:—

“1. He describes L’Angellier as not constitutionally liable to choleraic or other attacks. *Ans.* The Dundee evidence.

“2. He assumes, on no proof or shadow of proof, that L’Angellier had an interview with Miss Smith on Sunday night, March 22. The appointment was for Saturday. But suppose Miss Smith willing to remedy the failure, this might not be (often *was* not) in her power.

“3. The Lord Advocate ascribes the full weight of candid sincerity to L’Angellier’s suspicions that Miss Smith had meant to poison him. And yet to this same man, in the imaginary interview of the Sunday night, this Lord Advocate ascribes so entire a disregard of his own avowed suspicions, that Miss Smith is accredited as having effected her purpose of a triple dose solely through the blind credulity of this awakened victim.”

In the autumn of 1857 his daughter Emily went to Ireland on a visit to Mrs. Craig, her sister—a fact which has left in record some letters delayed at Lasswade longer than in some cases was desirable. The following reply to the Captain of the Manchester Grammar School was called forth by this circumstance:—

“MY DEAR SIR,—Your letter of September 4, inviting me to the commemoration festival of the Manchester Grammar School, reached me about noon on this day, Tuesday, October 13. The cause of delay was simple enough. It had found its way originally to Lasswade, near which place (about seven miles distant) my youngest daughter and myself have a cottage; and accordingly *that* is my regular address. But for the greater part of the past year my daughter has been visiting one of her married sisters who lives in Ireland; and for my own part, the labour of overlooking the press has detained me away from Lasswade for the last seventy-two weeks, during which period I have gone out of doors only for half-an-hour, and in a carriage. Your letter, therefore, with all others of every description, was packed up in a miscellaneous parcel, and this

parcel by a mere accident was opened this day. It would convey a false impression, however, if I should leave you to suppose that I had not been otherwise recalled to the business of your letter during the long interval of forty days. Mr. Hogg has repeatedly made me acquainted with your obliging messages sent through *him*, and he therefore is free from blame. All the blame that *can* attach to the case is mine ; and in ordinary circumstances I should think myself inexcusable, but in such circumstances no such delay could have occurred. I plead for myself the same excuse—derived from the inexpressible horror and agitation connected since the end of June with the convulsions in Bengal—which so many of our fellow-countrymen have, pressing with unusual severity upon a nervous system in some degree shaken by forty-five years' use of opium.

“Pardon my abruptness if any should seem to mark my style of communication, and also my egotism, which in this case is inevitable. Two years ago my second daughter married Lieut.-Colonel Baird Smith, who enjoyed considerable reputation in Bengal as an engineer officer, and was also favourably known by his connection with irrigation for the N.-W. Provinces. The station at which he resided was a small and obscure one, viz., Rourkee ; and when first this hideous explosion of malignity began, I heard with great thankfulness that the station had these two vast advantages—first, that it was not a dépôt for public treasure ; and, secondly, that it lay upon a byroad, not leading to any place more important than itself. It possessed, besides, a sufficient stock of guns from 6 to 24-pounders. The native sappers and miners, however, that happened to be quartered at Rourkee were amongst the earliest mutineers, but fortunately not until they had been tempted away and absorbed into Delhi. Meantime, no place could be entirely safe ; and one alarming incident, which exposed at the same moment the weakness and the strength of the place, occurred at an early stage of the enormities. One evening about six or seven, when the resident British (or, in the ridiculous slang of the day, the Europeans) were all gathered together at dinner, a servant whispered to Colonel Baird Smith that a detachment of about forty native troopers had ridden into the station, and desired to speak with the commandant. Colonel Baird Smith said nothing to the company, but immediately went out, and naturally in some anxiety, for though the men had not announced themselves as mutineers, he had little doubt

that such they were. He thought it best to try this question by telling them that in his opinion the best course for them was to move off to Meerut. The men replied that such was not *their* way of thinking. 'Very well,' said the Colonel, 'come, then, to this open area, where you can feed your horses whilst we discuss the point in question.' Naturally they followed him without suspicion, and in a few seconds found themselves arrayed before a battery unmasked, which could have closed the discussion with an unanswerable syllogism of scenical catastrophe. Under this advantage he dismounted them and also disarmed them ; and for the present the danger had melted away."

This letter gives the first hint of a project which, somewhat to the surprise of all, he carried out, though not without considerable distress and difficulty, in new circumstances—a journey to Ireland to visit Mrs. Craig :—

"MY DEAR MARGARET,—Emily's letter, enclosing a few lines from yourself, reached me *this morning*. Along with these came a '*leader*' of October 21, and a straw-coloured letter from 'D—— L——,' dated Charleston, S. Carolina, October 3, 1856, whose main request is, that I would '*write one line that will permit (your own express permission I ardently desire) your name to Christianise my first-born son.*' But note, I am to send one line '*that will contain one truth, one fact, or one great thought, which I can give to him when he begins to bud and blossom as a human thing.*' Truths run rather low with me at this moment ; but I should think he would consider three falsehoods at *par* with one truth. He has taken the trouble to send his letter to Boston, U.S., at a rude guess I should say 1500 miles. At Boston it is of course forwarded by Messrs. Ticknor, Reed, and *Fields* (is that name right ? for I have always some perplexity about it) ; and from Boston it hops over to Lasswade, a matter of 3000 miles. Then from Lasswade to Tipperary how many ? Shall we say, thither and back again to Edinburgh, 550, vaguely calculated thus :—A. Edinburgh to Carlisle, say 90 miles. B. Carlisle to Liverpool, 122 miles. C. Across to Dublin, 60 miles = 278. This (*viz.*, 278) taken to and fro, *i.e.* doubled, makes 556 ; and there remains the *to and fro* between Dublin and Pegsborough—what is *that* ? Is not the entire journey from Dublin to Pegsborough equal to 120 miles ? Enlighten me. If it is, then 240 miles added to 556 will want but four miles of 800, and that gives a total of 5200. But, I am quite

in the dark about your Irish section of the journey ; which, however, is, at this present time, simply the most interesting route in Christendom, closing, as that vista does, in the little *Eicon* (if not *Basilike*, yet doubtless) *Angelike* of dear Eva. Most anxious I am to see her. And if I were destined to take no further journey in this life, supposing (I mean to say) that such a restriction upon my locomotive faculties were already entered into her adamantine ledger by the haughty lady Destiny, I should warn her of a probable *erratum* impending ; one such *erratum* at the least, viz., involved in one journey to a certainty *ex voto* (i.e., in discharge of a vow made on hearing of her birth) to the shrine of her little holiness, Eva Margaret Craig. So far, at all events, if no further, I must rise in rebellion against any decree of the gloomy trinity, Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, which should tend to draw an enchanter's circle of arrestment about my vagrancies ahead !

"I am greatly obliged by any letter that has run such a circuit, and of course it becomes a duty to reply. But, as Cassio, whilst allowing that the ensign must be saved, yet insists on the lieutenant's salvation taking precedency, so it strikes me that I ought to send 'one truth, one fact, or one great thought' to Pegsborough, before I can be free to export any similar commodity to Charleston. And the truth is, that I have for some time back had a fact, whilst also, the fact is, that I have for some time had a truth, packed up, or as good as packed up, and corded, for sending over to you. Both the fact and the truth, I scarcely need to say, relate to dear little Eva, who at this moment, I believe, by the courtesy of Europe, takes precedency of all flesh."

The subject is still present to his mind as he writes recording his son Frederick's arrival from India :—

"MY DEAR M.,—This day is Sunday, July 11, but as the light is already decaying, there is little or no prospect of getting this letter into the post-office before to-morrow. So in effect I may as well date my letter at once Monday, July 12, by which Jesuitical artifice I shall perhaps escape a black eye from Sir A. Agnew in case we should ever meet in Hades.

"Paul Fred (or, as *he* reads the record, Fred Paul) presented himself here on Friday last at 4 P.M. ; he and Emily had travelled down from Boston on the preceding day, and were both anxious chiefly to concert plans and combine movements with me for invading Tipperary as soon as possible. Being called

on so suddenly for my report upon the possibilities as connected with my own wishes on the one side and my own engagements (I mean *promises*) on the other, I made my answer as dubious as oracles of old sought to make *theirs*. But this, as I have said, was on Friday; and Saturday's meditation showed me that I might reconcile a journey of ten or fifteen days with all my previous responsibilities, if casuistically examined. Fred dated the time of our journey as ten days distant, but *that* was on Friday.

"Emily had prepared me, by one of her Boston letters, to look for little change in Fred. And in fact there is none, except as regards complexion and expansion of chest. His complexion is emphatically what you would call *sunny*; not *tanned*, which is a fugitive grace, but burnt in, encaustically painted. You seem to read a century of sunlights *funded* in his face. All that an apricot ought to be (for it owes its name to the Latin word *Aprīcus*,* warmed and coloured by the solar orb) *that* is Fred. And as regards his *chest*, it is exceedingly like a *chest of drawers*, so great is the expansion across the shoulders. This sally of wit, I am sorry to confess, is a plagiarism from Hamilton Reynolds, a witty friend of mine some thirty-four years back. But what is the use of witty friends, if one may not plunder them once in thirty-four years? And, moreover, I have restored it to the vocabulary of compliment; whereas my friend Hamilton R. had occasion so apply it to the case of a *female* friend, who trespassed too much in her mature dimensions upon the sacred privileges of the male sex.

"Now let me call your attention to a little matter, but which Mr. John, minimus, and Miss Eva may chance to regard as the weightiest matter in the whole letter.

"There is plenty of time for you to write and tell me what little thing there is which would be likely to meet some want or fancy of both. I am not at this moment so rich as in a month (or possibly less) I shall be. Consequently, what I wish for at this moment is something trivial as regards cost. Emily fancied perhaps a doll for Miss Eva, but I objected that doubtless her household of dolls is already mounted. As to books, a *tiger-book*, a *wolf-book*, an *elephant-book*, are what I have long been preparing, but I do not wish to spoil them by

* * '*Aprīcus*.' What do I mean by that—placed over the *i*? I mean simply that *Aprīcus* must not be pronounced as if rhyming to *Africus*, but as if rhyming to *Fredericus*.

sending them prematurely. I am, in short, aground in my speculations on this point; but as there is time still for you to write a few lines of instruction to me, perhaps you will do so. At present (for take notice it is no longer Sunday—that is all used up—and in regard to the whole of this present page, *Tuesday*, or by all likelihood even *Wednesday*, unhappily may come to be the date) our plan is to leave this place on *Wednesday*, July 21, and to stay with you about eight, nine, or ten days. Fred and Emily came over this morning; and this was the arrangement proposed by Emily. For Johnny, your latest hope, my suggestion was that a rake, a spade, and a hammer, gimlet, and bag of nails might be a proper *nuzzur* to approach him with. But Emily thinks that even now he has more spades than *I* have. But if you can indicate any better implement of industry, or war, or skill, either here or at Belfast, I will look out for it.

“It is not often that one looks with hope and expectation to the capacities of hatred and scorn in one's friends. But at present both Fred and I are likely to be dismally disappointed if you do not go along with us in our demoniac abhorrence, and also our infinite disdain, of the thrice-accursed Sepoys. No tongue can give utterance to the burning wrath which kindles within us at the very word *Sipahee*, and its contraction *Sepoy*. Did Fred tell you in any letter of the particular little plot which these childish devils were brewing ten or twelve months ago at *Peshawur*? On a certain day they had made sure of the 70th (Queen's Regiment) being called away at night to engage and afterwards to hunt through patches of jungle (or other cover) a native regiment then in full explosion of its mutinous venom. Luckily on that day a rumour arose in alarming strength that the native corps within the lines of encampment, amounting to five regiments, had (in the teeth of contradicting reports from our British officers appointed to search them for concealed arms and ammunition) contrived to bury and otherwise hide a redundant quantity of all that was needed to make them efficient enemies. Most happily this suspicion renewed itself in greater strength than ever within a few hours of the critical moment when neglect of it or delay would have been fatal and irretrievable. Search was made once more, and this time not a ‘make-believe’ search. Arms of every kind were found in abundance, and in consequence a most seasonable change in the military arrange-

ments. A Sikh regiment was sent against the mutineers ; our own 70th was kept in the station ; and there was made a further revelation of a plot for murdering all the women, children, and sick soldiers.

"Last date—7 P.M. on Wednesday, July 14. Fred was here this morning again. I believe we start on Wednesday, July 21. To-morrow without fail, rest of this letter, and final arrangement as to starting."

It can very readily be imagined that a trip to Ireland was a serious undertaking for one who had so little faculty for dealing with new scenes and circumstances. The journey, however, was accomplished, and here we find De Quincey, on his return, pleasantly recalling some of its more memorable points :—

"MY DEAR M.,—This is Friday night, and I, being in a mood for chattering, with no obvious recipient on whom to bestow my tediousness, select yourself as one that cannot run away from the deluge. First, let me take a flying retrospect of our late visit to Lisheen, which to me has certainly been beneficial. You remarked a change of appearance ; and since my resettling here this change has become more palpably marked in sleep, in dreaming, in appetite, and other circumstantialities of daily life. One remorse only I carry away from Lisheen, viz., that I did not kiss the little bonny mouth of Buddee. Mr. Craig, in a slight way, at Goold's Cross, reproached me with this omission as if an oversight. But oversight it was not. The secret consideration which moved me to suppress the request (that else was on my lips) to visit his pillow, was the belief that Buddee slept in the arms of Joanna, who, if a truly derived daughter of our sad old 'ganmama,' Eve, the orchard-breaker, would not relish the sudden intrusion upon her nocturnal deshabelle of a foreigneering Protestant. True, that afterwards I saw Joanna in the hall ; but this was at a moment of hurry and general valediction.

"Let me rehearse the stages of our travelling experience. To Goold's Cross we drove under the restless faith that we were too late. But once *at* Mr. Goold's station, we found ourselves 'shunted' into the rearguard of those who are summoned to the exercise of patience by wearing the character of people foolishly and sneakingly too soon. Thus was realised for the thousandth time the word which the prophet spake at

my birth—'This man shall always be in time, and indeed basely in time ; but, for all *that*, he shall never once escape the pangs of being too late.' Cassandra, by a like fate, having consented to accept the gift of prophecy as a silent pledge that she would favour the amorous suit of Apollo, nevertheless jilted the indignant God. To recall his gift was impossible ; but he poisoned it by the curse attached to her predictions that she should never be believed till it was too late to reap the benefits of the warning. Just so did the good fairy say to me on my natal morning, August 15, 1785—'My lad, I've a kind of liking for you ; and herewith I make you a little present.' 'What is it, ma'am, if you please?' 'What is it? Why, if you *must* know, it is this : that most odious of vices, which men call procrastination, shall never dare to come near you.' 'Very true,' replied the bad fairy, who had seated her fat person on the other side of the bed, 'thru' for you : procrastinate he shall not ; he shall be the chief and the leader upon earth of all miso-procrastinators ; but still he shall reap the two grand penalties of procrastination the very worst.' Indeed ! you wicked old lady : and what penalties are those?' 'Why, these two : in midst of *too-soonness* he shall suffer the killing anxieties of *too-lateness*. In Dr. Donne's words—

"He shall *dream* treason ; and believe that he
 Meant to perform it ; and confess, and die ;
 And no record tell why."

Secondly, which is the other penalty, he shall suffer the endless reproach of procrastinating.'

"Suppose us then embarked on the Great South-Eastern Railroad about 7 A.M. Somewhere in the forenoon we reached Dublin. But of course our fate is always to find ourselves at the wrong station, and, at present, in search of the true and orthodox station, we entered on a course of discovery that to me seemed by very much more tedious than our ninety-five miles' rush from Mr. Goold's Cross to Dublin. Endlessly we draw along the most dusty of quays or wharfs (or wharves), and always, as in some infinite dream, on looking forward in hopeless inquiry for the cause of our funeral pace, we found the same solution of the mystery, viz., that we were creeping along at the tail of 666 waggons."

The notion of a fate dooming him to live perpetually under the fear of being too late was one that he ex-

pressed in several varying versions. The following is so exquisite and dainty in its way, that we brave the risk of being accused of repetition in giving it as a successor to the version in the preceding letter:—

“At my birth, among the fairies that honoured this event by their presence was one—an excellent creature—who said, ‘The gift which I bring for the young child is this: among the dark lines in the woof of his life I observe one which indicates a trifle of procrastination as lying amongst his frailties, and from that frailty I am resolved to take out the sting. My gift, therefore, is—that, if he must always seem in danger of being too late, he shall very seldom be so in fact.’ Upon which up jumped a wicked old fairy, vexed at not having received a special invitation to the natal festivity, who said, ‘You’ll take the sting out, will you? But now, madam, please to see me put it back again. My gift is—that, if seldom actually in danger of being too late, he shall always be in fear of it. Not often completing the offence, he shall for ever be suffering its penalties.’ Yes, reader, so she said; and so it happened. The curse which she imposed I could not evade. My only resource was to take out my revenge in affronting her. On this occasion I whispered to her, whilst mounting the box, ‘Well, old girl, here I am; and, *as usual*, quite in time.’ That word ‘*as usual*’ must, I knew, be wormwood to her heart, so I repeated it, saying, ‘Your malice, old cankered lady, is defeated, you see, *as usual*.’ ‘Certainly, my son,’ was her horrid reply, ‘you are in time, and generally you are so. But it grieves me to know that for the last half-hour you have been suffering horrid torments of mind.”

So far we have allowed ourselves to travel into the sphere of private domestic relationship. Our purpose in doing so will have been fully attained if the reader has been led to feel that De Quincey’s almost morbid peculiarities, which led him sometimes to live apart from his family for considerable periods, did not spring from any lack of affection for them.

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As suggestive of other associations, quaint and characteristic in their own way, arising out of the Lothian

Street life, we may here give some extracts from a letter addressed to us by the late Mr. Richard Rowe, author of "Episodes in an Obscure Life :"—

"My first lodgings in Edinburgh, he writes, "were the rooms in Lothian Street in which De Quincey died—I was, in fact, the next tenant. The good people of the house, a widow, her maiden sister, and a niece, had a very worshipful recollection of their 'nice little gentleman'—that was their phrase for him. They evidently liked him, and said that he was 'bonnie' and 'soft-spoken.' They showed with some pride the relics of him they possessed, which could certainly claim the sanctity of antiquity. The affectionate reverence they showed was very genuine.

"The maiden sister was De Quincey's messenger, and on the strength of the printing-offices she had been in, and the literary men she had spoken to, had come to look upon herself as almost a bluestocking. She told me that she sat for hours with De Quincey, arranging his books, numbering his slips of *copy*, &c. Her notion of his mode of composition, however, almost proved that their affectionate reverence arose more from his attractive and likeable character than from any true perception of his greatness as a writer.

"This maiden sister seems really to have been a mature guardian angel to De Quincey. More than once, she said, she had 'put him out' when he had fallen asleep with his head on the table, and overturned a candle on his papers. She used to buy his apparel for him piecemeal : now a pair of socks, now a pair of boots, now a coat, now a waistcoat—never a whole suit. Once she had to order for him a kind of military cloak lined with red. When he had an engagement to dine out, she had to keep him up to it, and to call for him afterwards, lest he should forget to come home at the hour fixed, as he was apt to get liveliest in the early hours, and to begin then to feel himself at home with his friends. In grateful appreciation of these services, he used sometimes to hire a carriage and drive her and her niece out to Lasswade to spend the day, and at other times he escorted them to the theatre.

"The greasy, crumpled Scotch one-pound notes annoyed him. He did his best to smooth and cleanse them before parting with them, and he washed and polished shillings up to their pristine brightness before he gave them away."



CHAPTER XXIX.

A CHAPTER OF NEW REMINISCENCES.

THREE gentlemen, who in their several ways were competent to speak on De Quincey, having enjoyed personal intercourse, and in one case intimacy with him, from miscarriage of letters and accidental delays, were not able to forward their recollections to me in time for the first edition of this work. With some sense of irony, they reached me just after the book had gone to press. To these obliging friends I would now try in part to make amends, though, alas ! in one case amends can only be made to his memory. This was Mr. James T. Fields of Boston ; and a peculiar interest attaches to anything he might say about De Quincey ; for he was the efficient pioneer of the Opium-Eater's great reputation in America ; and, doubtless by his skilful execution of his self-imposed task of collecting the complete edition of De Quincey's works on the other side the Atlantie, did not a little to stimulate De Quincey to fall in with Mr. James Hogg's proposal for an English edition, thus doing not a little to justify Hawthorne's dictum that Americans were better critics of such literature than Englishmen are. With this short explanation and apology I may now venture to print Mr. Fields' notes—the more that he remained to the end a faithful admirer and friend of our subject :—

“ As was said of Sir Henry Wotton, this also was a man of most persuasive behaviour, of sweet discourse and civility.

I never knew a more perfect gentleman. If good manners had never been invented before, De Quincey would have initiated them, for he was a perfect master of courtesy and excellent breeding. His voice was full of kindness and conciliation, and his musical utterances, once listened to, could never be forgotten, for they were the very witchcraft of speech.

"Some thirty years ago, if any of us had been walking or driving along that pleasant road which borders the river Esk and connects the city of Edinburgh with the village of Lasswade, we might have encountered a great author wrapped up in a very small and dusty suit of black. The strange figure would first attract us by its pallid, delicate, but thought-wrapped face, its wandering, questioning eyes, and the noticeable inferior dimensions of its body. If we passed it, the figure would raise its hat, and then we should see a head of grand proportions. If a lady were in our party the figure would bow very low and stand uncovered in the road until she went by. If afterwards we described this person to any one in that region, and asked whom the figure might represent, we should have had for answer, 'Oh, that must have been Mr. de Quincey, the "Opium-Eater," the man who has visions, and sees wonders, and hears sounds in the air like no one else!'

"Little he was, indeed, like Dickens and Jeffrey, the latter of whom had so little flesh that it was said his intellect was indecently exposed. He evinced the double eccentricity of genius and opium, kept his money in his hat and his manuscripts in a bathing-tub, and otherwise was guilty of strange things. It seems a little singular that one who was such a perfect master of the English language should never have been heard of by M. Taine, should have been thought dead by people in Edinburgh when he was living within ten miles of the town, and should have been otherwise ludicrously overlooked in his own time. He had upon his forehead the 'alabaster shine' often noticed in the faces of opium-eaters. He told me of a row which Christopher North once had with a Frenchman in the theatre. The Frenchman was demonstrative, and attracted attention, so North told him to be quiet, and as soon as they got outside they would 'settle it.' 'Yes,' said I, 'and what then?' 'Then,' returned De Quincey, gazing vaguely into the distance, 'the Professor closed both

the little Frenchman's eyes, and, his vision being eliminated, the conflict ended.'

"Style with him had an absolute value of itself, and was in itself an exquisite art. It was to him precisely what the fine workmanship of the Florentine Cellini is to the connoisseur; it is equally prized whether embodied in a vase of bronze or marble, ivory or gold. 'There is strength in *perfection*,' said Michael Angelo. There are passages in De Quincey's 'Joan of Arc' that have never been surpassed by any writer, ancient or modern. When De Quincey is in his highest seat his words peal forth, and his manner recalls then what Moschelles writes in his diary of Rachel's acting in *Les Horaces*. 'As she proceeds,' says the composer, 'she seems to gather inspiration; the measured *tempo* becomes a *vivace*, then a *presto*, and then a *tempo rubato*.' The long-swellings, sustained and victorious passage gathers and rolls on until the 'sense aches at it' from very fulness and splendour. I wish I had time and space to tell you fully of my visit to this wonderful genius, this master of all knowledge. During a walk of several miles which we took together in 1852 he gave me a most delightful account of his early life among the hills of Westmoreland, when his daily companions were Wilson, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. He had much to say to me of the harmonies of language, the perfection of finish in certain English prose writers who have passed into fame, and he quoted Goethe's saying that 'the difficulty in composition lies not in *learning*, but in *unlearning*.' He spoke also of his baffled efforts, his defeated hopes in life, his unfinished work on the Human Intellect which he had so longed to leave completed as his topmost crowning effort. As we walked along together his manner was at times singularly nervous and startling. Not infrequently he spoke like a man who had seen ghosts, and there was a kind of solemn awe and wonder in his tone. Much of the time he walked bareheaded, as if his brain were hot and restless. When he mentioned the Supreme Name in conversation it was always with that august reverence which is born of faith and unceasing worship. On our way to the ruins of Roslin Chapel he discoursed of absorbing themes he was intending to treat at some future day, themes that went unwritten with him to the grave. Grandeur of views of immortality I have never heard from mortal lips. And could he have been induced to put on paper what he was

in the habit of speaking on the sublimest subjects, no addition ever made to merely human literature could possibly be of more value to our race. He had foretastes, like some of his great progenitors, of the *Beyond*, but he only touched the borders of that mysterious land which he might have explored (so far as mortal ken is permitted), and put on record for all time the glimpses allowed to his wonderful vision."

The letter which accompanied these Reminiscences was dated from "Gambrell Cottage, Manchester, Essex Co., Mass.," and in it Mr. Fields wrote:—

"I could, of course, have made them much fuller, but I know how precious every page of your Memoir ought to be. This goes to you from my seaside home, where I shall probably be for several weeks to come. . . . I have also sent you by this mail the early sheets of a forthcoming little book of mine. It will be published next month. In the first article you will find another reference to De Quincey."

This volume—his last—was the dainty and suggestive series of essays titled "Underbrush," and in it Mr. Fields, under the title of "My Friend's Library," indulged the phantasy of inviting us, as we shrewdly guess, to a survey of his own library, with all its priceless characteristic memorials and memoranda. If Mr. Fields really presented so many of his own gems to another, it was indeed a case of unparalleled generosity and self-sacrifice. Here is his reference to De Quincey: he has just made a most interesting note on Coleridge, and presented a few of his letters:—

"From one Opium-Eater to another—to the greatest in the annals of laudanum—is an easy transition. Everything relating to Thomas Papaverius, as the 'Book-Hunter' calls him, my friend has collected, and hoarded in a niche by itself. Fragile, unsubstantial, potent, and original—apply these epithets to the only man of this century who includes them all, and you get De Quincey, one of the great masters of English, one of the most fascinating of all modern writers. Every scrap which my friend has collected relating to the *personell* of this interesting individual is of value. Observe the quaint unlikeness in this communication to the missive

of any one else. The note, which is in the fairest hand, was addressed from Lasswade in Scotland to the American editor of De Quincey's Writings, who happened at that time to be in England. I found it carefully pasted into the 'Confessions : ' it explains itself :—

" ' Thursday Evening, August 26.

" ' MY DEAR SIR,—The accompanying billet from my daughter, short at any rate, under the pressure of instant engagements, has been cut shorter by a sudden and very distressing headache. I therefore, who (from a peculiar nervousness connected with the act of writing) so rarely attempt to discharge my own debts in the letter-writing department of life, find myself unaccountably, I might say mysteriously, engaged in the knight-errantry of undertaking for other people's, . . . wretched bankrupt that I am, with an absolute refusal on the part of the Commissioner to grant me a certificate of the lowest class—suddenly and by a necessity not to be evaded I am affecting the large bounties of supererogation. I appear to be vapouring in a spirit of vainglory ; and yet it is under the mere coercion of severe necessities that I am surprised into this unparalleled instance of activity.

" ' Do you walk ? That is, do you like walking for four hours "on end"—(which is our archaic expression for continuously) ? If I knew that, I would arrange accordingly for meeting you. The case as to distance is this ; the Dalkeith railway, from the Waverley station, brings you to Eskbank. That is its nearest approach, its *perihelion*, in relation to ourselves : and it is precisely $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles distant from *Mavisbank*—the name of our cottage. Close to us, and the most noticeable object for guiding your inquiries, is—*Mr. Annandale's Paper-Mills*. Now then, accordingly, as you direct my motions, I will—rain being supposed absent—join you in your hotel in Edinburgh any time after eleven o'clock, and walk out the whole distance (7 miles from the Scott Monument) ; or else, I will meet you at Eskbank ; or, if you prefer coming out in a carriage, I will await your coming here in that state of motionless repose which best befits a philosopher. Excuse my levity, and believe with sincere pleasure we shall receive your obliging visit.—Ever your faithful servant,

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.' "

The next was Dr. Peter Bayne, who was so good as to send me the following notes with some modest deprecia-

tions of their value, and a request to put them in the fire should they seem as "dry, hard, and sapless" as they appeared to him—a thing, it may well be supposed, I should never have done. They have a value as showing in quite a special way the scientific modesty and courteous accessibility of the old man :—

"It was in the summer of 1852—as nearly as I can date the occurrence—that Frank Seafeld and I found ourselves in the village of Lasswade with some hours on our hands. We had come from Edinburgh to see the old chapel and glen of Rosslyn and the picturesque seat of Drummond of Hawthornden ; but whether we had seen as much of these as we wanted, or whether, as I rather think, we had made some mistake as to the day, and had not been admitted to the Jonson and Drummond seclusions at all, there seemed now to be nothing for it but to wait the departure of the evening coach for Edinburgh. It then occurred to us that we were near the house of one in whom we took fifty times more interest than in Drummond or Jonson either, the world-famous Opium-Eater, the intensely admired of all admirers of literary form, Thomas de Quincey. We were furnished with no introduction, but consciousness of unfeigned reverence encouraged us to believe that we could approach him without any appearance of disrespect. We went into a shop in the village, procured pen, ink and paper, and redacted a note with which we presented ourselves at De Quincey's door. Had we been introduced by a Prince we could not have been more courteously received or more hospitably entertained. For several hours we felt as if we formed part of his household, witnessing the quiet but perfect happiness in which he lived with his daughters. His manner set the guest entirely at ease, and yet precluded the very idea or possibility of a liberty being taken with him. His person and manner, though his dress was dingy enough and sat on him with a looseness that suggests the scholar, conveyed an irresistible impression of distinction. The tiny form, the lofty forehead, the pale cheek, the finely cut sensitive mouth, the mildly glowing eye, have been noted by all who saw him. Never to be forgotten when once seen, they require no mention from me. I recollect that he was exquisitely amusing in describing the distress of the hero in some tale—one of his own, if I mistake not—who vainly

strove to rid himself of an obnoxious umbrella, which, though carefully left behind in stage-coaches, or steam-boats, or picture-galleries, or flung over the bridges of tidal rivers in distant continents, was sure to be found by some devoted friend, and to return, with long bill of costs, to its owner. I was in those days wild about Carlyle, and De Quincey, who had known him when he first came out in Edinburgh, spoke a good deal about him. His conversation, said De Quincey, was at that time brilliant in the extreme, but spiced with paradox and tending to extravagance. It had reminded him, the narrator, of the talk of a passenger he had once travelled with in a stage-coach, who was splendidly clever but of disordered brain, and bombarded Newton with eloquent vehemence, pausing at each succeeding climax of dazzling absurdity to refresh himself with a burst of complacent laughter.* But, after twenty-five years, the particular traces left of De Quincey's conversation have become irrecoverably dim. I vividly recollect, however, the exquisite mental enjoyment with which I listened to his talk,—the marvellous facility with which he summoned up the most lucid and beautiful words, the flow, as of liquid silver, of anecdote, erudition, philosophy, poetry, fun. In the evening he accompanied us to the place whence the coach started. Often since then I reflected with wonder and pleasure on the spectacle of one whom great genius, illustrious reputation, and the experience of a life of letters and society had left so kind, so simple, so noble.”

The third correspondent to whom I have alluded had been a student in Edinburgh, and lodged for some years with the next-door neighbour of Mrs. Wilson in Lothian Street, and had become friendly with the Opium-Eater, through little services rendered to him now and then. He was at the time in India on work which implied long spells of travel in hilly districts beyond the reach of regular posts :—

“When a student in Edinburgh, I lodged for some years in the opposite ‘flat,’ that is, in the corresponding suite of rooms on the other side of the landing, to that in which De Quincey lived, and my landlady was not only a neighbour, but a friend

* This, of course, is the same character so facetiously written of in the “Autobiographic Sketches.”

of Mrs. Wilson and of Miss Stark, whose names are now somewhat closely associated with that of De Quincey in the minds of the few who were intimate with him in Edinburgh in his later years. My first introduction to the odd-looking, ill-put-on little man arose from my doing him the very slight service of following him down the [common] stairs with a handkerchief and some other articles he had dropped in his hesitating progress downwards, and I need not say that, notwithstanding his startled expression when I spoke to him, I was surprised at the way he recovered himself, the exceeding grace of courtesy with which he recognised the service, asking me at last whether I was not a lodger of Miss T——. I mentioned the circumstance to my landlady, and she then entertained me with an account of his peculiarities, which seemed to dwell more on her mind than his literary fame, though she did know that he was Mr. de Quinshy, as she tended to pronounce it, and that he had been, and even now was, an opium-eater, and had written a book about his opium-eating, and was always writing, as she said, at the risk of setting the house on fire, and, as she certainly gave me the impression, about opium-eating still, as if it were the sole interminable subject of his thoughts and inquiries. That led me to inquire for the ‘Confessions of an English Opium-Eater,’ which I read in a very dingy, dirty little tome got from a Circulating Library ; and I need not say that my sense of self-importance was not a little heightened by my discovery that I had for once, so to say, rubbed shoulders with an author of world-wide repute. He was then at work on the ‘Collected Writings,’ for Mr. Hogg, which he found a very trying affair. When I happened to meet him again I took care to salute him duly, when some polite sentences would be interchanged ; and by-and-by, on my expressing a desire in that direction, I was invited, no doubt on the diplomatic intercession of Miss Stark, who had been enlisted in my interest, to take tea with him. I found him ready to receive me, arrayed in a kind of loose duffel coat, to which he himself drew my attention by apologising for his undress appearance ; but he said that he had for long forgone the habit of dressing in the strict sense for any kind of entertainment, and made some half-humorous remarks about his horror of the habit of announcing one at a dinner-party, as with a ‘long-tongued trumpet of fame.’ He spoke about Tennyson’s poems (about which I was then youthfully enthusiastic)

remarking on the rich pictorial effects and inwrought elaborate jewelry of phrase ; but desiderating dramatic strength, direct human interest, and grandeur of imagination in opposition to mere opulence and vitality of fancy. We must remember, however, to do De Quincey justice, that Tennyson's greater works were then unwritten. He quoted some stanzas from the 'Recollections of the Arabian Nights,' and a line from 'Ænone,' which poem he said he had heard Professor Aytoun read with very fine effect. His voice was rich and mellow, but now and then subsided into something of a quavering monotonous tone, which, however, may have been due to his loss of teeth, and may not have characterised him in earlier years. He told me he had been much amused by an article he had read on macaronic literature, of which I had never heard before ; but I was enabled to follow him by aid of the illustrative quotations he gave, and of which he seemed to have an inexhaustible store. His line of talk was evidently directed wholly by a desire to interest and to amuse me, in which certainly he succeeded. I was only able to put in a sentence now and again to indicate my interest, and the old man talked on in his silvery voice that made a deep impression upon me—touching in passing on the defects of the Scottish Universities as regards the development of an *esprit-de-corps* in the students, and also hinting at some defects in the English Universities in misdirecting or in overdoing it. As he talked I was more and more struck by the almost weird-like look of his face, attractive and pleasant as it was. There was a kind of shine upon it, as of childhood, but also an indescribable under-hint of age, which was exaggerated when the face was caught in certain lights by minute wrinkles all over it. The eyes undoubtedly had a little of a 'cast' in them, or at all events gave that impression when he looked at one closely or with special interest. His rooms were littered with books and papers, and on my remarking on the great amount of space he must require as his library increased, he mentioned that he had an ingenious way of relieving the pressure on his rooms in Edinburgh by hiring a conveyance now and then and giving his faithful attendant, Miss Stark, a journey down to his cottage at Lasswade, with a day's outing and a box of books. He referred to the differing habits of literary men with regard to books ; contrasting Southey's neatness with Wordsworth's carelessness, and quoting Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, and Shelley on the subject. He

never seemed to be in the least doubt about a verse or sentence ; if he was not exact, he had a rare gift of ekeing the fragments out with links of his own.

“With regard to his opium-eating, he was very careful to explain to me, when he indulged himself in a small quantity of that tempting liquor from a glass, that he had never pretended to have been able to become a total abstainer save for a few days (or it may have been weeks) at a time ; that he regarded it as being as essential to his existence in anything like tolerable comfort as food itself, for which he deemed it in great degree a substitute, for he ate but little ; and he said that for long his sufferings from some obscure disease of the stomach (which the doctors did not fully understand) had been such that without opium life would have been intolerable to him ; and certainly he would never have been able else to write what he had written. He ended by quoting some lines from Thomson’s ‘Castle of Indolence,’ which I regret that I have forgotten ; but I have not forgotten the expressive tone and emphasis with which he did it ; and the sense of the extreme appropriateness and significance of that quotation still remains, but I have no copy of the book beside me to enable me to recall it.

“I spent another evening with De Quincey after this, but cannot recall any thing special to add here, and then shortly left Edinburgh for Glasgow, and did not return to Edinburgh for some years, and that just after De Quincey’s death, when I called at 42 Lothian Street, to see my old landlady, and also Mrs. Wilson and Miss Stark. They were in the deepest mourning for their lost lodger. They had just had time to sort up all their relics, and time had already begun to cast its glamour over them. They displayed a very miscellaneous gathering of articles, which, if they had not been ‘sanctified’ by the genuine affection with which they spoke of the deceased as ‘bonnie’ and ‘soft-spoken,’ might have proved laughable. I had even to look upon the worn brush with which De Quincey would oftentimes sweep up his own hearth rather than be interrupted by the presence of another when he was busy in writing, or in the still more trying labour of correcting proofs, and listen to accounts of his odd ways of arranging his copy and numbering it, in which he was wont to ask the assistance of Miss Stark, who, according to her own account, had in many things to wait upon him like a baby. They told me that

on his death many one pound Scotch bank-notes were found between the pages of books, where he had put them in order to take out the crumples which he greatly disliked to see or to feel, and that sometimes he would forget that he had put them there, and that he would polish up shillings and coppers with wash-leather, before he would give them away again, and would put them inside paper till he had done so, and that dirty coppers greatly distressed him, as he would not give them away again dirty, and failed to overtake the many little packets he had laid aside with the good intention of rubbing them up a little. Of the reason or the origin of this strange practice of his I have failed to form any idea, nor could any of the landladies help me. Of his peculiarities in these respects they had much to say, but with no sense of any ludicrous element mingling with it, which shows the elements of attraction and loveliness there must have remained with De Quincey to the end, for certainly he was in *some* ways peculiar, and even with all his gentleness and desire at self-help, occasionally troublesome from his want of method. I do not know whether these notes are of any worth, or whether they will reach you in time for your purpose from this outlandish corner; but it has afforded me much pleasure to recall the memories of these old days, with their bright episodes, and to write them down in the hope that they might be of some service to you."

May not the above be the explanation of the circumstances of which Mr. J. R. Findlay thus makes note in his "Recollections"?—

"After his death Mrs. Craig told me that the mass of letters and notes, many unopened, to be gone over was bewildering. In the heterogeneous heap, too, stray pound-notes and packages of small coin, in silver and copper, were so numerous as, when collected, to form a considerable sum. Some of the notes were between the leaves of books; the parcels of coin had probably been handed to him as change, laid aside, and forgotten."*

Dr. Robert Carruthers, of Inverness, genial as quaint, and simple in manners as full of rare knowledge, and with whom I had spent many pleasant days, was kind enough to write me several letters when he heard that I

* Findlay, pp. 65-6.

had undertaken the task of writing the Memoir of De Quincey. In one of these under date March 25, 1877, he says :—

“I am delighted to see that you have taken up De Quincey, whom Charles Mackay maltreated so shamelessly. You will find him a difficult subject—especially the Edinburgh life. I have been thinking if I could help you to any new intelligence. . . . I met De Quincey now and then, but only recollect one delightful night spent with me at an oyster supper in the Rainbow, when I listened with intense pleasure and surprise to his musical voice and eloquent periods for at least six mortal hours. . . .

“I have been a sad sufferer from a kind of chronic bronchitis, which murders sleep and leaves one weak and spiritless in the mornings. I think it is Lord Hervey (Pope's *Sporas*) who says that as we come near the end of the journey of life the roads get very rough. Quite true !”

At a later date Dr. Carruthers supplemented his information thus :—

“Where my name occurs in one of the letters refers to the article on Pope which he contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Adam Black told me that he found the little man one day in the hands of a Sheriff's officer for some small debt. De Quincey, as you say, was utterly unable to meet any difficulty with ordinary practicality and common-sense. On discovering that the debt was under £30, Adam Black became responsible for it, on condition of De Quincey furnishing the articles on Shakespeare and Pope for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, which he faithfully did.

“I forget whether I told you that my meeting with De Quincey on the occasion of the Rainbow celebration was accidental. I happened to be in Tait's shop when De Quincey came in, and Tait introduced me to him. He had a long colloquy with Tait, but I waited till it was over, and when he emerged I begged to accompany him on his way home, and he consented, but stopped half-way to Lothian Street, and, with many apologies, said he was not desirous at that time to take any one to his lodgings. I then asked him if he would come next night and take some oysters with me at the Rainbow, to which he gave a willing consent. He came, and I

had a most delightful evening—or rather night—with him. He certainly was a wonderful talker. I had heard Rogers and other famed conversationists, but was overpowered by De Quincey's flow of melodious talk.

"I have such wretched health from bronchitis and sleeplessness that I have difficulty in scribbling this gossip. Nevertheless, if the enemy is not too potent, I hope to see you again in London at the end of the summer. You could not do better than come and spend a week here in my empty house, where, as Johnson says, we can fold our legs and have our talk out."

Dr. Carruthers added that he never saw De Quincey after this. It is evident, however, that this was not because of any lack of desire to meet on either side, as we can very well believe. Dr. Carruthers's quaint anecdotic style of talk, and his wide out-of-the-way information, in many of the walks De Quincey too had delighted in, would have proved in a high degree attractive and stimulating to the Opium-Eater, who would have welcomed the hearty genial appreciation and the capacity for those "long flashes of silence," which are said to be so eloquent, especially when you may chance to have a great talker beside you. Fortunately, we have proof that both gentlemen were anxious to meet. In Mr. J. R. Findlay's "*Recollections of De Quincey*" we read, under date January 30, 1839, that a meeting had been arranged, but that it was rendered impossible owing to De Quincey's serious illness—not so severe, however, but that he could write a humorous letter from bed. Mr. Findlay says: "I was anxious to get De Quincey to meet our friend Mr. Carruthers of Inverness, who remembered him in old times, and wished to renew the acquaintance." But De Quincey had to decline in these terms:—

"30th Jan. [1859].

"MY DEAR SIR,—Nothing is more distressing to me than the being compelled by uncontrollable accidents to decline what I should naturally regard as an invitation alike flattering and friendly. . . .

"Mr. Carruthers I had a special interest in meeting about twenty years ago: if I do not greatly mistake, I met him—

not at Professor Wilson's house, but in his company. Since then Mr. Carruthers has written, with results known, to the Antipodes (who, however, continue little the better for the information constantly reaching them) on the Biography of Pope. Consequently, having myself also troubled these waters—though only enough to stir up the mud—I have a personal as well as a general interest in *him*. So I should have made an effort, you may be sure, to meet him."

Gentle, genial, cheerful spirit, peace be with thee! All De Quincey's stray literary acquaintances were not so just as thou wert!

With his simplicity and helplessness the debts and difficulties were perhaps only to be expected, more especially after the death of his helpmeet; and as causes of such mishaps we need not go any further than this, though we must mourn that so much of peace and energy must have been lost to him through his precipitating himself into such painful positions, with all their distressing associations. If it is correct that we really owe the two masterly articles on Shakespeare and Pope in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* to such a cause, it was another illustration of the familiar adage, "It is an ill wind that blows nobody good." And it was surely a lucky inspiration of Mr. Adam Black to think of these subjects, and right well and earnestly did De Quincey in this case at all events apply himself to working off his indebtedness. We have a clear record of one other case, evidently at an earlier period, when all his books were seized and part of them sold. Here is a portion of a letter from his own hand in proof:—

"It was now eleven o'clock. Two hours more would have ratified my despair. About noon, Mr. Laurence Harrison, a man who had never seen me before, came forward: in the space of one minute he offered and completed a contract for ransoming the books: he offered twenty guineas on the spot; and ten would have been accepted by the drunken ruffian who was offering to sell them. In three or four hours the books were all carted away into his care. But previously I found and drew forth from heaps of dust and rubbish the volumes which were the jewels of my library, and bought by me at the Duke of Roxburghe's thrice famous sale in 1812. These

books, for which I would not take a thousand guineas, had literally been sold (some at least) by the scamp at threepence each ; but the purchaser, not having his purse with him, had left them.

“Afterwards I discovered that nearly a cartload of books had been already sold privately to four or five different gentlemen. But they really *were* gentlemen : and all sent me word that I should have them back. One, a Dr. Robinson of Clifton, a clergyman, called upon me, and added to this offer that, as perhaps it might be inconvenient to pay the money back immediately, the repayment should await my leisure ; but the books should be sent forthwith. Would you believe it, all my papers—letters even to my wife, hers to me in early days—were all open to the public ? Oh, my God ! what heartrending pangs a man has to endure in this earthly pilgrimage ! what bitter tears to shed ! what groans to stifle ! The agitation of my dreams, always tumultuous at intervals, has been fearful since this accursed affair began——Cup of life ! if a man could know at his birth with what a draught thou wert filled, and if he had it in his choice, would he, would any man of profounder sensibilities, begin to drink it, and not resolutely put it aside ? It is a trifle after this to mention that many books which were presents to me (some also from dear friends who are in their graves) had all been sold : naturally they were pointed out to the notice and preference of purchasers by their magnificent bindings : for all, as free-will offerings, and pledges of friendship or memorials of love, were sumptuously bound, and some even gorgeous and *ne-plus-ultra* specimens of the bookbinder’s art.”

Dr. James Hedderwick, editor of the *Glasgow Citizen*, sent me this note in 1877 :—

“When De Quincey was in Glasgow, Dr. Charles Mackay was editor of the *Argus*, a paper no longer in existence, and I remember the latter asking me to meet De Quincey at dinner, but though he had accepted he did not appear. The circumstance recalled to my recollection that a year or two previously I had been invited to meet him at Mr. Robert Chambers’s in Edinburgh, and that he also on that occasion disappointed the party—one of whom was taken to task for not having called and brought him along, when, it was alleged, he would

have been quite ready to come. This accepting of invitations and then forgetting all about them was said to be not uncommon with him, and to the cause in question I must attribute my never having seen that brilliant writer."

It would thus seem that, in spite of what Dr. Mackay has written, hardly with his usual discrimination or correctness, about De Quincey, he did not succeed in getting De Quincey to dine with him so often as he desired. And I possess further proof in a letter from another Glasgow *litterateur* of those days—whose acquaintance I made in the most unexpected circumstances—that Dr. Mackay failed oftener than once to get De Quincey to dine when he wanted him.

Mr. Austin Dobson, with that generous readiness to assist others in literary undertakings which all know who know him well enough to have any opinion on the subject, sent me on May 8, 1877, a note, with the following extract from the "Life of Alfred de Musset," by his brother, which, had it reached me in time, would have led to some very interesting results :—

"Pour ne rien oublier, nous citons, en passant, une première publication qui n'est guère connue. Alfred [*de Musset*], à dix-huit-ans, s'estima heureux d'avoir à traduire de l'anglais un petit roman pour la librairie de M. Mame. Il avait adopté ce titre simple : *Le mangeur d'opium*. L'éditeur voulut absolument : *L'Anglais, mangeur d'opium*.* Ce petit volume, dont on aurait sans doute bien de la peine à retrouver un exemplaire aujourd'hui, fut écrit en un mois. Le traducteur, sans être trop inexact, introduisit dans les rêveries du héros étranger quelques unes des impressions que lui avaient laissées le cours d'anatomie descriptive de M. Bérard. Personne ne prit garde à cette publication sans nom d'auteur ; elle disparut dans un flot de nouveautés littéraires comme une goutte de pluie dans la mer."—*Biographie de Alfred de Musset, sa vie et ses œuvres, par Paul de Musset. Charpentier, Paris, 1877, p. 90.*

Dr. Richard Garnett, who had got access to a copy of this curiosity, in his edition of the "Confessions" has devoted a little chapter to it, pointing out, in his own

* Le titre de l'original était "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater."

characteristic way, the odd expedients to which De Musset had recourse to preserve what he would perhaps have called French atmosphere, to please French taste; bringing "Ann of Oxford Street" down from the stars to the streets, and much else of the same kind, with here and there some of the quaintest mistranslations imaginable.

Another visitor to Lasswade towards the end of his life was Mr. James Payn, who has made record of his visit with genial and grateful turn in his "Literary Recollections." He was introduced by Miss Mitford. "He [De Quincey] lived a secluded life," says Mr. Payn, "and even at that time had become to the world a name, rather than a real personage; but it was a great name. Considerable alarm agitated my youthful heart; I felt like Burns on the occasion when he was first about 'to dinner wi' a Lord:' it was a great honour, but something rather to be talked about afterwards than enjoyed in itself. There were passages in De Quincey's writings which showed that the English Opium-Eater could be severe and satirical. My apprehensions, however, proved to be utterly groundless, for a more gracious and genial personage I never met. Picture to yourself a very diminutive man, carelessly—very carelessly—dressed; a face lined, careworn, and so expressionless that it reminded one of 'that chill changeless brow, where cold Obstruction's apathy appals the gazing mourner's heart'—a face like death in life. The instant he began to speak, however, it lit up as though by electric light; this came from the marvellous eyes, brighter and more intelligent (though by fits) than I have ever seen in any other mortal. They seemed to glow with eloquence. He spoke of my introducer, of Cambridge, of the Lake country, and of English poets. Each theme was interesting to me, but made infinitely more so by some apt personal reminiscence. As for the last-named subject, it was like talking of the Olympian gods to one not only cradled in their creed, but who had mingled with them, himself half an immortal. . . .

"The announcement of luncheon was perhaps for the first time in my young life unwelcome to me. Miss de Quincey did the honours with gracious hospitality,

pleased, I think, to find that her father had so rapt a listener. . . .

"As I took my leave, after a most enjoyable interview, to meet the coach, I asked him whether he ever came by it into Edinburgh.

"'What!' he answered, in a tone of extreme surprise: 'by coach? Certainly not.'

"I was not aware of his peculiarities; but the association of commonplace people and their pointless observations were in fact intolerable to him. They did not bore him in the ordinary sense, but seemed, as it were, to outrage his mind. . . . 'Some years ago,' he said, 'I was standing on the pier at Tarbet, on Loch Lomond, waiting for the steamer. A stout old lady joined me; I felt that she would presently address me; and she did. Pointing to the smoke of the steamer which was making itself seen above the next headland, "There she comes," she said. "La, sir! if you and I had seen that fifty years ago, how wonderful we should have thought it!" Now the same sort of thing,' added my host with a shiver, 'might happen to me any day, and that is why I always avoid a public conveyance.'

"My interview with De Quincey I was not likely to forget, but I never flattered myself that he would have any remembrance of his youthful visitor. A few years afterwards, however, I received from him an entire edition of his works, with a most gracious allusion (in the 'Autobiographical Sketches') to my poems. 'The story of the student of St. Bees,' he says, 'has been made the subject of a separate poem by my friend, Mr. James Payn, of Trinity College. The volume contains thoughts of great beauty, too likely to escape the vapid and irreflective reader.' This good-natured eulogy rang in my ears for many a day; nor did my college friends forget, at all events, one portion of it; with a monstrous misapplication of terms, they henceforth dubbed me 'the vapid and irreflective reader.' I remember my mother showing, with pardonable pride, this criticism of De Quincey to a Dean of the English Church who was then at the head of the High Church party at Oxford. 'Very flattering

to your son, madam, no doubt,' he said; 'but who is this Mr. de Quincey?'

"Such ignorance was, of course, unpardonable in my eyes, but it is quite amazing how ignorant so-called scholars often are of matters connected with the literature of their own country; in many cases they even fail to understand its beauties when they are pointed out to them, while, on the other hand, anything written in a dead language, however dull and poor, they value at a fancy price."

TWO PECULIAR TRAITS OR TASTES.

Miss de Quincey has recalled and been good enough to set down her impressions of two peculiar traits in her father's character which have not hitherto been noted. The first refers to his taste in fiction, which, though somewhat surprising at first sight, is only consistent with his vein of old-fashioned John Bullism, and his readiness in early years to adapt himself to the atmosphere in which he lived.

"1. As regards novels, romances, and short stories one and all, my father was quite old-fashioned in his tastes. He simply lived in the romances of his youth. He cared nothing for delineations of character, and I do not think he cared much for pictures of modern life, or even for fun or humour—at all events of the later type, in novels. Dark-lanterns, and Spanish cloaks, and three knights riding through a wood, and a mysterious villain with dagger or stiletto were the *sine-quâ-nons* in the novels of his youth; and he seemed to favour this kind of work to the end. 'Klosterheim,' indeed, is conceived much in this vein. I was often surprised at the direction of his tastes in this respect. I shall never forget his impressing me with a sort of supernatural curiosity by the enthusiasm with which he spoke of 'The Simple Story' of Mrs. Barbauld, and how disappointed I was with it, and had to restrain myself from too obtrusively showing it. Miss Harriet Lee's German's story was to him wonderful: I thought it one of the dullest of the dull. When the stories of the Brontë sisters appeared he was much exercised and puzzled, and tried hard to bring

himself to the proper point of interest and sympathy ; but scarcely with full success, though he admitted the power that in some respects was shown. Both Charlotte and Emily Brontë wrote to him, and sent him copies of their books. He greatly admired their poetry, and was every way well disposed towards these 'young men [women].' They sent most agreeable letters, which I am afraid have been lost, or given to some autograph-collector. But though much pleased with their poetry, especially Emily's, and though he had before him the spectacle of us three sisters sitting up till three in the morning to finish one or other of their novels, on one occasion he laid the book down with a sigh : 'I fear this lady or gentleman, which ever the author is, is making a mistake : young ladies, who are the chief readers of novels, will never stand to be interested in that sort of people : what they like is some heroic person, say a young or successful officer.'

"2. A remembrance of another peculiarity of my father occurs to my mind, which for a time became rather alarming to us. We were a little stern and severe about it, as young people are apt to be over the peculiarities of their elders, and it might have been dangerous, if he had caught cold. You know the way (sometimes rather embarrassing, though a nice practice, if it was not quite such a trouble) in which the Scotch people of all ranks invite people of all ranks to funerals. I think my father was too well known for them to take much notice of his not going. To upper class funerals he never went, but a sad case in the village aroused his sympathy. John Campbell, the shoemaker in the village, had a *little* boy drowned. A notification arrived, and an invitation to the funeral. To our dismay, my father determined to go, though he had only a dark blue coat and a brown one. We thought the wearing of such coloured garments at a funeral the people would take as an insult. However, he came up to show himself after he was dressed,—so very like a child, who did not quite like to do a thing he was warned against, and yet was determined to do it ; and at length we were coaxed into agreeing that 'the coat was not so very blue.' But when he got out into the open the bridegroom-like blueness of the coat made us look at each other and sadly smile. Strange to say, the very people that one would have expected to stand most on attention to such matters took no notice ; but the little blue

figure, amid all the trappings of woe, was taken as much loving care of as the silent little corpse in the coffin.

“He was greatly interested in the ceremony. Dr. Mungo Mackenzie—a clever man—was a friend of his, and, it was said, had a great gift of making good prayers on such occasions, though he was very poor as a preacher. After that breaking of the ice he was inclined to attend funerals, and his brown or blue coat was, I think, rather an interesting novelty, and generally regarded as such. At length came a day when he went over to Glasgow. The father of an old servant of ours—a carter at Mr. Annandale’s mills—lost a little child in scarlet fever. An invitation to the funeral was sent in my father’s absence; and he never heard of it till afterwards when he returned. He, however, to make up, wrote such a really touching and beautiful letter, that we were told the poor man had it framed and hung up over his chimney-piece.”





CHAPTER XXX.

THE LAST DAYS.

IT cannot be said that the end came to De Quincey quite unexpectedly, though he himself was reluctant to admit that it was so near. He had outlived the allotted threescore and ten; had seen many men, his fellow-workers, of far more robust physical build than himself, fail and pass away; but he cherished his plans and prospects with a kind of childlike faith, and was, in his own way, industrious and hopeful almost to the last. Tokens of weakness had, however, been unmistakably proclaiming themselves for the last two years. The slightest extra effort tried him, and left him exhausted. An hour's search after a page of *copy* gone astray amongst his multifarious strata of printed matter, or the struggle to recover a reference, would prostrate him for days; laudanum, which he was now compelled to resort to more than for years he had done, on account of increasing nervous pains, lost its effect, and his sleep was broken and fitful. Little "worries," which before had been set aside by effort of will, took possession of his mind, and distracted him in the midst of his labours. But he was so gentle, so hopeful, so possessed by the fear of giving unnecessary trouble or concern to others, that he would not for weeks listen to the suggestion of the friend who was now most often with him, in his rooms in Edinburgh, that a physician should be called in, or that his daughter should be sent for. At length new

symptoms made themselves manifest, and he consented that his daughter should be brought to him, and that Dr. Warburton Begbie should pay him a visit. This physician, who passed away in March 1876, and who was as noted for high culture and chivalric devotion as for his professional skill, was unwearied in his attentions, and was so deeply interested in his patient, that he not only brought his distinguished father and one other eminent physician to consult about the case, but carefully set down for the benefit of relatives and friends his impressions in an account of those last days. This writing has never before had a more extended use; and as it has been put into our hands, and as we ourselves had benefited by Dr. Begbie's great skill and goodness, we have a peculiar, if a mournful, pleasure in here introducing it:—

“My first visit to Mr. de Quincey,” he writes, “was on the afternoon of Saturday, the 22nd October 1859. I had never seen Mr. de Quincey before that day, though cherishing from boyhood the highest admiration for him. I found him in the parlour, sitting on a sofa, but resting his head on a cushion placed on a chair before him; this posture was assumed not from pain, but by reason of feebleness. He received me with all that graciousness and winning kindness of manner and of speech for which he was remarkable, and briefly explained the nature of his indisposition. After my examination, which succeeded the description Mr. de Quincey had given me of his case, he expressed the most ready acquiescence in the employment of the remedial means judged to be necessary. I found Mr. de Quincey then, as for many days thereafter, able and ready to speak on all subjects with that clearness of intellect and perception which were so remarkably his; indicating no failure, as far as I could judge, of the mental faculties.

“The following day, Sunday (October 23rd), Mr. de Quincey was better; the degree of feverishness which existed the previous day had passed; he had spent a better night, slept more, and had awoke with a greater degree of refreshment. With a kindness and consideration which deeply impressed me, he acknowledged the beneficial operation of the remedies that had been suggested; and enlarged, in a manner altogether new to me upon the peculiar effects they had produced.

These, though in no way remarkable in themselves, could only be appreciated by one who had learned, as he had, to notice the consequences—sensational as well as active—of all agencies. Very vividly then, as afterwards on many occasions, were some of the descriptions in the ‘Confessions’ brought to my remembrance. On this occasion, as on many subsequent visits, Mr. de Quincey alluded to the habit, in which he had so long indulged, of taking opium. With that noble honesty and candour for which, no less than for intellectual endowments and highest mental cultivation, he was distinguished, and with a childlike simplicity and most captivating kindness, he expressed the feeling—amounting to deep-seated conviction of what was imperatively demanded—that the physician should be informed, with the most scrupulous fidelity, as to all the habits of his patient. I then learned, as I had been led to believe, that for a long period Mr. de Quincey’s indulgence in opium was extremely limited; though the total abandonment of its use he had found to be (and with this conclusion, in a case of confirmed habit, medical men will not be disposed to differ) inconsistent with the enjoyment of that bodily health, but more particularly that state of mental calmness and tranquillity, the possession of which he desirated above all things. He readily acknowledged the perniciousness of habitual indulgence in opium; though he was equally ready to claim for the potent drug effects eminently beneficial. ‘*Quare facit opium dormire?*’ is a question put by Molière; but the sleepy, brain-intoxicating quality of opium De Quincey prized not. How much the substantial power and brilliant fancy of his writings had to do with the opium-eating I do not inquire; but that it helped to keep active and entire, during so many long years of bodily feebleness, that large and constant-working brain—that, in a word, it fed it—I have no manner of doubt. And further, that the almost singular immunity Mr. de Quincey enjoyed from headache, which, in the course of his long life, he never knew—a common source of annoyance, oftentimes of misery, to ordinary-living students—was likely enough due to the opium, I also believe.

“For several days after the visits referred to, Mr. de Quincey’s state of health, though causing anxiety, was not such as to excite alarm. Two or three times, during the course

of as many weeks, there recurred slight and transient febrile attacks, such as are incidental to persons who have passed the allotted span of human existence, accompanied by a renewal of his catarrhal complaint. But these passed, leaving him, perhaps, a little weaker after each ; though always manifesting—and this was, I believe, noticed as a characteristic feature in all the ailments Mr. de Quincey suffered from—a decided and ready power of rallying. Encouraged to visit him very frequently, I availed myself of so great a privilege ; and for many days spent a short time in the morning, and again at a later hour, with him. On the former visits, whether seated in his chair or lying in bed, I generally found him attempting to read without spectacles, which he never employed. Almost up to the last moment, he looked anxiously for the morning papers, and listened with great interest to what was read to him from them, if he was not able to read himself. The knowledge Mr. de Quincey possessed of the most recent events, political and of general interest, was most amazing, and could only have been acquired by diligent perusal of the periodical press. He had, however, no relish for municipal matters ; still less for sectional ecclesiastical affairs. When tired of reading he was read to by the daughter whose presence cheered his last days, or by a faithful attendant, for whose comfort, as was invariably his character, he manifested the utmost solicitude, bearing many little annoyances that increased trouble might not be incurred. In his correspondence, long after he had ceased to reply to letters—that was forbidden, indeed, during his whole illness—he took the greatest interest. It would be gratifying to many who wrote to him in his last days to know how much he valued their letters, as well as the little acts—especially the reciprocal attentions of authors—of kindness which so many paid him. Day after day books were handed in ; these, when unable to read, he nevertheless carefully examined. Thus I saw him treat Mr. Allibone's recent Herculean task, his ' Dictionary of English Literature.' The kind mention in that work of himself, upon which I remarked, led him to speak of what he styled ' the more than deserved consideration paid him in America, particularly in Boston.'

"During those days of dull November, which, with all its gloominess and more than ordinary fog, did not in the least

affect the serenity and tranquil composure of his spirit, devoutly reverential and adoring—as the amplest testimony, were that required, could be made by the writer of these lines—and animated by the most enlarged benevolence towards mankind, especially towards children, Mr. de Quincey was evidently becoming feebler. He was generally unwilling to think so himself, but at times referred with perfect composure to the probably not distant approach of the last enemy. Summoned on one occasion hurriedly by night to his bedside, owing to a tendency to swoon, which then for the first time during his illness had alarmed his daughter and attendant, I arrived to find him better, and to receive from his lips those warm and courteous expressions of gratitude which throughout life I shall hold in remembrance, coupled with an apology for disturbing me at so late an hour, adding that his desire to see me had arisen from the conviction that, were the symptoms he suffered to continue or to return, death must occur. This was said calmly and most resignedly. During several nights, and latterly by day, when he had fallen into a gentle sleep, his mind wandered. Once or twice, suddenly awakening, he seemed much startled and surprised, and for a short time there was some difficulty in reassuring him as to the identity both of persons and objects in the room. At other times, when the mind wandered, the words which were uttered sufficiently loud to be heard distinctly revealed the perfect composure within, and nothing he said afforded evidence of that *senilis stultitia quæ deliratio appellari solet*. Often he recognised the ‘footsteps of angels,’ and addressed words to ‘the departed.’ He enjoyed at such times ‘a holy, calm delight,’ was often speaking to children, and seemed anxious they should be especially cared for; thus at its close verifying the character he had enjoyed through life, of extreme fondness for the young.

“While for many weeks anxiety as to the result of his illness had been entertained, it was only on Sunday, the 4th December, that alarm was awakened. Suddenly Mr. de Quincey became weaker; and though on Monday he had rallied not a little, the duty of summoning an absent daughter was apparent. On Tuesday he was in his chair for a short time, and conversed with readiness, though not with the same ease as formerly. Decidedly weaker in the evening of that

day, from the circumstance that he had refused all food, it was only too evident on Wednesday morning that his hours on earth were numbered. He recognised in the forenoon his eldest daughter, who arrived in time to receive the blessing of her dying father; and with the single expression of 'Thank you' to those around him, which was uttered with touching sweetness and radiant expression, he passed into a drowsy state, by degrees became insensible, and thus on the forenoon of Thursday died, his death being ascribable rather to exhaustion of the system than to specific disease."

Miss de Quincey has kindly set down some additional details respecting those last days:—

"I had been visiting my eldest sister in Ireland, when I received a note from Mr. Hogg, saying that my father was not well, and that there were symptoms which caused some anxiety to his medical adviser. I started for Edinburgh the next day, and arrived at my father's lodgings to find him rather better, but still in bed. He never was well enough to be removed to our little cottage at Lasswade, so I took up my abode in his lodgings till his death, about a couple of months from the time I had heard that he was taken ill.

"For some time after I returned he was much better, and usually cheerful. He was attended by his landlady's sister, Miss Stark, with the most devoted kindness, and by myself. But though wonderfully sweet and gentle in all his ways, there was one difficulty that had to be contended with. His hatred of anything like rules made it difficult for him to follow any medical directions. Life that was to be floated on stated doses of beef-tea did not seem to his care-worn mind worth the struggling for; and as to any medicine which owed its effect to repeated doses at fixed times, it was set aside as a 'devil's drench,' which was not fit for a Christian to swallow. Not that he disliked medicine if he might take it in his own way, as the following circumstance, which he told to myself and sister some years before his death, will show:—He went one day to dine with a gentleman in Edinburgh. For some reason, which I cannot remember, he was asked to stay all night. My father agreed, and was shown into a bedroom that had lately been occupied by a delicate brother of the host. This gentleman had now, however, gone

abroad, leaving only a few medicine bottles nearly empty. These were all neatly arranged on the washstand. My father, left alone, began to examine them. There were 'the drops as before,' the 'teaspoonful to be taken when the cough was bad,' &c., &c. Surely, he thought to himself, it would be hard if one of these mixtures did not suit him. Surely no one would grudge him the heel-taps of a lot of old medicine bottles. Having read and marked the labels, he forthwith proceeded to inwardly digest the contents of the bottles. Soon, however, his conscience began to prick him. Had he not taken a great liberty? Perhaps his host wished to try their effect upon himself, or his wife did. Perhaps they were to be kept as a tender reminiscence of the absent brother. The next morning he descended to the breakfast-table, and with grave propriety made his apologies to his host for having thus abused his hospitality. Great was his astonishment at the wonderful amiability of Mr. —. Instead of viewing my father with a stern eye, the apologies were received with a burst of laughter, which was in a measure checked, however, by the fear of evil consequences to my father's health. But Mr. — was reassured by hearing that something—though what the something was could not be discovered—had been decidedly beneficial.

"Very few of our friends knowing that I was in town, and having had but little experience in sick-nursing, I felt occasionally at a loss on some points, and questions arose, one question in particular arose, which made me think of referring to a friend of my sisters who did have experience. I wrote asking information from Mrs. Thomas Graham Murray of Stenton, Perth, who was then resident in Randolph Terrace. My note brought me better than an answer, the lady herself, who had driven over with a liberal supply of Mr. Graham Murray's old port and other dainties to tempt the appetite of a sick man. She gave me much valuable information, just such as I needed then, and was a source of cheer and comfort in every respect, visiting Lothian Street almost every day. It gives me the greatest pleasure to make this record.

"Mr. J. R. Findlay, Prof. Lushington, and Mr. Hill Burton were really the only persons he himself saw besides the doctor; but our friends Helen Smith and Mary Widnell (now Mrs. Bushby) went out and in from Lasswade, and were

sometimes in the house. His last message to Mary Widnell was a very curious one—and both I and she often think of it. He was very fond of her, but never lost the stately habit of speaking of her and to her as *Miss Widnell*, though he had known her intimately for years. He asked me two days before his death who was in the sitting-room. I said, ‘Mary Widnell: she has brought you some soup from Mrs. Widnell, who thinks you will perhaps like it.’ ‘Ah,’ he said; ‘is it dear Mary Widnell? Is she there?’ ‘Yes,’ I said, ‘but she knows you are not well enough to see her, and she is going; I shall just say good-bye and be back in a moment.’ Miss Widnell had already gone, however, and I at once returned. ‘Dear Mary Widnell,’ he said thoughtfully; ‘give her and Jane my most affectionate love;’ and then he added, thinking she was still in the sitting-room, ‘Tell her I fear I cannot see her just now, but say I look to see her as my very dear sister.’ It was a strange relationship for him to assume towards her, owing to the great difference of age, as she was but a girl at the time, and he had come much more into fatherly relationships than brotherly relationships.

“All during his illness my father was subject to fits of delirium, though these were seldom of a painful nature. They were chiefly connected with fancies about children, and sometimes he would wander back to the days of his own childhood. Still, he was always clear enough if any question of politics or history came up, and would converse with fluency about anything in the newspaper that interested him. To the last he was able to read without the help of spectacles—one eye doing all the work, the other one being invariably closed while either writing or reading.

“About a week before he died, while sitting up in an easy-chair lent him by his kind friend Mrs. Findlay, he gave me a long account of Froude’s views upon the history of Henry VIII. One night, when Miss Stark had left him, and I had taken her place, he woke up from his short sleep, and noticed Miss Stark’s absence, and then went on to say, ‘By the way, I wished to tell you what has displeased me much.’ I saw he was anxious about something, and I went and sat down beside him to listen. He then treated me to one of those curious turns that his passing attacks of delirium would take. ‘I am grieved,’ he said, ‘at the coarse manners that some rough

fellows displayed.' I said, 'Why? What have they done?' 'Well, you know, I and the children were invited to the great supper. Do you know what supper I mean?' 'No,' I said. 'Well, I was invited to come, and to bring the children to the great supper of Jesus Christ. So, wishing the children to have suitable dresses for such an occasion, I had them all dressed in white. They were dressed from head to foot in white. But some rough men in the streets of Edinburgh, as we passed on our way to the supper, seeing the little things in complete white, laughed and jeered at us, and made the children much ashamed.'

"We had rarely heard him mention his father's name during his life, he having died early. But one day he said, 'There is a thing I much regret; that is, that I did not know more of my dear father, for I am sure that a juster, kinder man never breathed.' He then went on to tell me many traits of his father's character which he had learned from clerks and servants, and which he had treasured up for years in his memory. At length his illness became so serious that we thought it better to telegraph to his only other daughter within reach, viz., Mrs. Craig. She came over from Ireland the day before his death. Great was his pleasure at seeing her, though, for some time, we fancied that he did not know her. Such was his constant thought of children, that he viewed her simply as connected with his grandchildren. 'How is mama?' he said when he saw her; nor did he address her as anything else but mama again. Towards the evening his weakness became extreme, and he said to my sister, 'Mama, I cannot bear the weight of clothes upon my feet.' My sister at once pulled off the heavy blankets, and wrapped a light shawl round his feet. 'Is that better?' she asked. 'Yes, my love, much better; I am better in every way—I feel much better. You know these are the feet that Jesus washed.' As the night wore on our kind friend Dr. Warburton Begbie came and sat with us, as my father's life slowly ebbed away. Twice only was the heavy breathing interrupted by words. He had for hours ceased to recognise any of us, but we heard him murmur, though quite distinctly, 'My dear, dear mother. Then I was greatly mistaken.' Then as the waves of death rolled faster and faster over him, suddenly out of the abyss we saw him throw up his arms, which

to the last retained their strength, and say distinctly, and as if in great surprise, 'Sister ! sister ! sister !' The loud breathing became slower and slower, and as the world of Edinburgh awoke to busy work and life, all that was mortal of my father fell asleep for ever.

"Curiously enough, just as he breathed his last the morning letters arrived, and amongst them one from an old school-fellow, the Rev. Edward Grinfield. They had not met for more than fifty years, but this gentleman, himself suffering from a mortal disease, as he said, wished to exchange a few words with his old friend before they should both pass out of this world. They had not heard of one another for years, and he hardly knew my father's whereabouts, still less how ill he had been."

The following is the letter, touching in its tone, touching in its circumstances :—

"BRIGHTON, *December 7, 1859.*

"MY DEAR DE QUINCEY,—Before I quit the world I should ardently desire to see your handwriting. In early life, that is more than sixty years ago, we were schoolfellows, and mutually attached ; nay, I can remember a boyish paper (*The Observer*) on which we were engaged. Yours has been a brilliant literary career—mine far from brilliant, but, I hope, not unsuccessful as a theological student. It seems a pity that we should not once more recognise each other before we quit the stage. I have often read your works, and never without remembering the promise of your talents at Winkfield. . . . It would cheer the evening of my days to receive a line from you ; for I am, with much sincerity, your old and attached friend,

E. W. GRINFIELD."

Mr. de Quincey was in his seventy-fifth year at the time of his decease. Students of his writings will remember the mingled humour and pathos that flicker so oddly through that passage at the close of the appendix to the earlier editions of the "Confessions" in which he anticipatively disposes of his own body ; but no such fate as he himself with gentlest humour had suggested awaited it ; and, though a grave among the Westmoreland

mountains might have been most fitting, there can be no sense of discord in thinking that on the spot where it now rests, beside the remains of her whom he so loved and mourned, the Edinburgh Castle rock looks gravely down, while the statue of Wilson is almost within sight.





CHAPTER XXXI.

SOME CHARACTERISTICS.

I.

THE first thing we note in De Quincey as bringing almost incompatible qualities into combination, and exhibiting them in free exercise, is the logical or analytic faculty working alongside the dreaming or purely imaginative faculty, without sense of discord. Whilst De Quincey was in the very crisis of his opium dreams, his mind could raise itself to interest in Ricardo, and find a kind of escape from his intensest sufferings there. De Quincey thus appeals directly to two orders of mind and sympathy, between whom there is little in common—no meeting-point or kindred aim. This fact alone should suffice to arrest precipitate judgment. The wide reach of his intellectual sympathies, which at one moment, in spite of physical and mental prostration, enabled him to hold out one hand to Ricardo, while with the other he grasped that of Wordsworth, would alone suffice to announce a phenomenon worthy of the most careful and exhaustive examination. What must indeed surprise those who devote themselves to a laborious study of De Quincey is the exact and persistent hold he has upon the laws of practical life and its conduct, and the casuistries that may lie behind them, as specially seen, for example, in his thoughts on duelling in "The Story of a Libel;" and also

his power to rise to the mystical and, if we may say so, transcendental. Sometimes his imagination and his analytic intellect seem absolutely to fall apart from each other, and to run each on its own way in separate courses ; but a pervading sentiment, touched more or less by a radiant, if not powerful, humour, catches at the skirts of each, and brings them once more into kindly union. Take, for instance, the passage, which is thrown into the midst of his "Opium Confessions," on the outs and ins of the life of that poor London lawyer in whose house he had found a lodging, and the premature but clear conception that the boy is represented as having of the whole structure of that order of life, and read it alongside of that ingenious illustration of the increased value of production by the beaver hat in the "Templar's Dialogues on Political Economy."

Even in the driest of sciences his imagination and personal influence prevailed. Readers in general would not be very apt to suppose that it was possible for Political Economy to become charged with the finest biographical suggestions. It is a dry and abstract study. Everything seems to shrink into an unclothed anatomy in its atmosphere. De Quincey himself confesses it, and nowhere with more directness than in these various notes in which he disposed of Mr. Malthus and his confused ideas on the "Measure of Value." But it is probable that he would never have attempted anything formal and complete in Political Economy had it not been for a strong personal attachment, founded, however, on scientific sympathy alone. For Mr. Ricardo his respect and gratitude—his reverence even—were unstinted. Many other calls had made it impossible for him to complete a work which he had intended to submit to Mr. Ricardo, and which lay unfinished at Mr. Ricardo's death. De Quincey's keenest sorrow was awakened because he had lost the opportunity of a long-anticipated privilege, and had foregone a chance of affording pleasure to one who had so greatly benefited him. What he had regarded as a duty to the living now became a still more incumbent duty to the dead. It was under such impelling

sanctions that he wrote his "Templar's Dialogues," and, later, his "Logic of Political Economy," which, when viewed in the light of these biographical facts, take on a new colour, and breathe even a sympathetic interest. On the death of Mr. Ricardo in 1823, De Quincey wrote in the *London Magazine* a short article in which he gave expression to these feelings. He titles it, "The Services of Mr. Ricardo to the Science of Political Economy."

It is this individual—this sympathetic—approach, which De Quincey takes even to the driest topics, that gives him not only the originality but the fascination by which he holds the student, and leads him on and on, in spite of digression and sometimes an overweening love of scholastic logic and learned reference. It is not impossible that some may think his admiration of Mr. Ricardo too excessive—a kind of craze. Interest and sympathy are recovered when we see how the element of personal sympathy lit up even his scientific curiosities, enabling him to secure for subjects strictly scientific a wider audience than the purely scientific mind ever could.

II.

Humour in combination with two such modes of intellectual sympathy as are signified by the names of Wordsworth and Ricardo is one of the most remarkable phenomena on record. But we find it in De Quincey—sometimes, it is true, allying itself too easily with what is merely secondary and fantastic; so that if it is to blame for not a little of his digressiveness, still it imparts to everything he does a bouquet, a flavour peculiarly his own. If this ever-present and kindly humour—this keen sense of the ludicrous and the salient disparities of life—saved him from pedantry, it did so only by making absolutely necessary for him a recurrent contact with real life itself. Even during the London period, when he was still in the throes of opium, does he not make record of that impulse under which, in opposition to the general experience of opium-eaters, he was impelled to mingle with the Saturday-night crowds in the more

frequented parts of London? And this Saturday-night wandering, he says, actually outweighed the attractions of the Opera, which then took place on the Saturday evenings.

Now, it is precisely here that De Quincey parts company alike from Coleridge and from Wordsworth. Neither of them had humour, nor had either of them any trace of this passion for rude life, most often allied to humour. In the one, such a tendency would have been found inconsistent with the constant effort after framing a metaphysical system; in the other, it would have done much to disperse the wealth of meditative impression gathered daily in the "wise passiveness" of communion with nature. To De Quincey's keen sense of humour we mainly owe it also that, in spite of the amount of autobiographic writing he has given to the world, any attempt either to gather the exact facts of his life, or to penetrate his character, so as to find a completely satisfactory reconciling point for these very desperate tendencies, is unspeakably difficult. What we mean is, that along with his self-revelation ran a singular reticence. He looks at himself very much as he would at another; and, as few men really respected more the "private rights" of others, even where fine insight might have fully revealed the secret that was half hidden from themselves, so he was in the intimate sense self-respecting. This led to the general observance of a rule in his autobiographic writing which may be shortly summed up thus:—"I shall be honest, strictly honest, in all that I reveal, but I cannot reveal all; and I shall be conscientiously careful, first, not to touch loosely any facts where others are concerned, and, secondly, I shall be chary even of direct references to facts that are *personal* to myself. Considering the atmosphere in which my autobiographic writing must move, this would indeed be to impart to it a certain element of the ludicrous, and the outward interests would speedily come to conflict with, and to overshadow, the inner and truer interests with which I am concerned, and would wholly defeat my purpose." In a few instances he may be said to have lapsed from his own principle, and in such a mass of autobiographic writing it would

have been wonderful if he had not; but no one would have more readily admitted than he would, on deliberate consideration, that these were, strictly speaking, lapses. De Quincey, then, in general deals only with facts and experiences which had something of *universality*; he does not care for dates or persons save in so far as they are essential to the general truth which he has resolved to follow. He himself, in a remarkable note to the editor of *Hogg's Instructor*, indicates this with masterly clearness and humour; and that very announcement might be taken as an illustration in little of his whole method—so far as he had a method—in his autobiographic writing. The isolated fact on which he founds is but a point of departure, a pinnacle, so to say, from which he may leap into a freer sphere, the atmosphere of which is common to all who can be said to have lived up to a certain level of experience or self-observation. Hence the unconnectedness, the obtrusive digressions and rangings from date to date, the want of straightforwardness in the mere narrative, and the general disregard of those elements which ought to be pre-eminent in biography proper. It seems as though he was quite as concerned to hide the connecting links of fact as to reveal the mental condition which obtained at the passing from one to the other. The clearness of his memory for facts is so evident, that his abstinence is at once seen to be due to conscious and pre-conceived intention. For those who read in the spirit of sympathy and imaginative reverie this is an endless source of gratification and delight. Humour, in its freer phases, however, must always be discursive; it is alien to a stern and exact adherence to presupposed order and common logic; and the manner in which De Quincey could be at once humorous and logical constitutes him at least a writer *sui generis*.

We shall soon see that to this humour, besides, we owe in a large measure the patient forbearance and the tolerant sympathy which at first are apt to surprise and puzzle us in a character at once so keenly observant and exposed to all the impatience and irritability usually associated with overstrung nerves.

III.

We have, then, in De Quincey, to start with, keen analytic intellect, along with delicate phantasy, sensibilities also keen, but exacting in their demand on the senses, and humour special and pervading, underlying a social instinct, imperious, and waiting on reactions. How much De Quincey owed to his love of the open air and his capacity of complete social self-abandonment—qualities not often found in combination with these others—it would be hard to say; but that he did owe much to these, as we owe much to them, is as undoubted as that he was a great dreamer and a master of English style. He was able also to exercise a true sympathy with the lot of others,—to detect the compensations of life, and find the lesson that lies in them—as witness the comfort he draws from poor Charles Lloyd's case, in that he suffered from no disease such as his. This patient, if not contented and cheerful, view of life is so obtrusive, indeed, as to give occasionally a tone of optimism to his writings, which is corrected only by specific occasions.

It is surely very noticeable, too, as being altogether unlike the usual impatience, irritability, and incapacity to detect the balancing advantages in everyday circumstances most characteristic of dreamers and those of overstrung nerves, that De Quincey should be content to find an advantage in the pressure put upon him by the periodical press to which he had been forced by necessity to unite himself, and to set forth even the accruing disadvantages in genially humorous self-irony.

As an instance of the kind of self-respect he often shows on critical occasions we might well cite here the reason he gives for failing to apply to any of his wealthy friends for help during the period of his wanderings. It was not alone the fear of being delivered over to his guardians. He says frankly: "It may surprise a reader who has gone through the slight records of my life, to find me originally, as a boy, moving amongst the circles of the nobility, and now courting only those of intel-

lectual people ;” and he then proceeds to give the reason. It had gradually impressed itself on him that, if he sought the society of such people, he must attach himself to them, occupy a doubtful position, lay himself open to the charge of sycophancy, &c., &c. “Every way, I saw,” he goes on to say, “that my own dignity—which, above all things, a man should scrupulously maintain—required that I should no longer go into any circles where I did not stand on my own native footing—*propria jure*. What had been abundantly right for me as a boy, ceased to be right for me when I ceased to be a boy.”

It was out of the elements of character which we here see at work—expressly conveying themselves into literature—that De Quincey’s quick social sympathies sprang ; for though he was, in some respects, intellectually a solitary, a sentimentalist, he was in no sense morally or socially so.

Nothing, indeed, could be further from a true criticism of De Quincey than to speak of him as habitually grave, shy, and bookish, and so given up to speculative and half-morbid brooding as to have no liking for the freer play of the social feelings. His case, indeed, was the very opposite. One of the most striking things about him was this—that a man who seemed to have, in many ways, added to a natural predisposition to solitude artificial bars to cheerful and lively social intercourse, was yet, among congenial companions, the freest and most spontaneous. He even confesses to a childish love of fun, of pure nonsense. “Both Lamb and myself,” he says, “had a furious love for nonsense—head-long nonsense. Excepting Professor Wilson, I have known nobody who had the same passion to the same extent.”

In opposition to the idea of his being solitary or unsocial, wherever he went he soon became the centre of very active attraction ; people of all kinds—landladies and landladies’ friends, neighbours and neighbours’ children of all classes, coming to seek and relish his society—a fact which is amply proved even by Dr. Robertson’s intercourse in Princes Street, Edinburgh. This, indeed, was an element in his changes of abode. He found that the

Frankenstein's spirit he had raised invariably became too much for him, and shut him out from the chances of study and composition he desired; and yet he was as helpless to throw off the incubus or to lay down exclusive rules in the matter as a child. This and his causeless fears, and his exaggerations of his difficulties, already referred to, in some part due to his accumulations, had much to do with otherwise unaccountable changes of abode—a good deal more than some of the other causes ingeniously invented to account for them.

IV.

With reference to his sociable nature, and to remarks often made on his lonely solitude, Mrs. Baird Smith has written:—

“Excepting now and again from the necessities of business, he was a man so essentially sociable that he was never separated from his family, sharing so intimately all their joys and sorrows that I never remember him absent from any event, whether small or great, and I cannot point to the time when he was not in constant habits of association with some good and true friend, with whom intercourse was both delightful to him and profitable.

“His work was always an extreme labour and difficulty to him, and could only be carried on under very special conditions. His best chance of accomplishing anything was from about nine or ten o'clock in the evening till about four to six o'clock in the morning. And his most deadly certainty of failure was the touching of anything in the nature of wine or spirits. There were wife and children running through much of his life: the wife and oldest son, even in the most depressed period of the Edinburgh life, sufficient companions even for a mind such as his, and, as said already, a friend to drop in of an evening, or to walk with. Even during the long night-watches, at the period I specially speak of, my mother was with him much of the time; and with many children at hand, there was too often a restless or fretful child to be the delighted companion of his solitude, had he been in danger of having too much of it. A certain amount of perfect quiet, though not necessarily of solitude, was indeed essential to him for the shaping of his work; but from the time when I first became aware of him helping my mother, wearied by a long journey, to superintend the behaviour of the children at the

dinner-table, examining each little scaramouch to see that it had not effected an entrance with unwashed hands, I can vouch that he was a constant presence among us ; my mother carefully training us to respect his busy times. After her death, indeed, things went very ill with him and with us too for a time. But there was rarely a day I did not spend with him from early till late, often too late for so young a girl ; and when I was not by any chance with him, some of my brothers were. You may smile at the notion of a child being a companion for such a man, but none the less so it was then and always.

"But his children were not his only companions. Such was his exceeding fascination for all sorts and conditions of men that he invariably attracted a circle around him, oddly enough composed at times, and this constantly increasing in its demands upon his time and sympathy, and occasionally becoming such a devouring pest that he, who could never resist even the most outrageous claims upon him, had no refuge but in flight !

"Indeed this too great companionableness, this overpopularity, was the real occasion of his few changes rather than any money embarrassments, which, with growing experience, and the occasional overhauling of his affairs by skilful friends, we had come to regard with much equanimity as mainly the figments of his own imagination, and never more than a few days' steady work would clear off.

"Something must also be allowed for his great power of expounding his sufferings, whether mental or bodily ; a power which of itself, it seems to me, removes him from that extreme of loneliness which has no such outlet ; and it is very possible that a matter-of-fact person might mistake a powerful wail over 'a common heritage of woe' for a complaint of personal isolation, leading to a weird impression of loneliness. Some basis for such an impression might be found in utterances like these, but in my idea they referred more to the inevitable loneliness of the human spirit than to any social failure either in himself or in the loving companionship which ran through much of his life."

V.

Over-exalted sensibility does not generally coexist with wide and keenly individual sympathies : the reverse indeed. If the reader recalls to mind Swift, or Sterne, or Rousseau, he will at once perceive what is meant. Even

the mildly sustained sympathetic impulses in Cowper owed much to accidental but exceptionally happy associations of a domestic kind, and would undoubtedly, but for these, have passed into a diseased and perverted egotism, intensified by the gloomy theological atmosphere into which at intervals he wandered, as if under the dictate of some relentless fate. In De Quincey, the nervous irritation which, as he says, "travelled rapidly over the disk of his life," lifted or was held in suspense for a brief space, when he could relieve himself from morbid preoccupations, by the presentment of striking characters or situations which called his sympathies and his humour into play. No more perfect instance of this could be cited than the picture he has given us of those hours of escape from self-communion during his residence in Grasmere, when at nightfall he would sally forth and engage his imagination in tracing out the course of the evening through its household hieroglyphics from the windows which he passed or saw; or his confession of some kind of compulsion leading him to fraternise with the Spanish-Galway gipsies on Glasgow Green; or his patient listening to the long-winded petitions of the beggars at Lasswade, of which his daughter has humorously told us.

This tendency to real life it was, declaring itself recurrently and with great strength, which chiefly enabled him to persevere in exercise, and force himself, as he says, into companionship with his fellow-men; and these two things did more to aid his final escape from excessive use of opium than any other causes put together.

His abstractive tendency, his absorption in his ideal world, his shy retiring from contact with practical affairs, did not, as in the case of many secluded dreamers and idealists, cause him to be discontented, peevish, and impatient, persecuted with an egotistic itch for self-utterance, or for outward changes and reforms. On the contrary, his dreamy abstraction was associated with the utmost geniality, patience, a true sympathy with moods and habits the most alien from his own. He is, in spite of some tendencies often allied with morbidity, very far from morbid. He is a philosopher, as he claims to be; but, as

we have said, he is so far an idealist, and carries his own atmosphere with him ; throwing over every creature with whom he comes into close contact the mantle of a gracious tolerance, in which defects were softened or obtrusive faults condoned ; and not seldom, by the very consideration and humane concession which this habitually prompted, he drew sweet waters where bitter streams might have flowed. One of the most expressive and touching examples of this was the kindness he received from his rough fellow-passenger on the top of the coach on that fruitless journey to Eton, in the hope of gaining Lord Westport's aid to negotiate an advance on security of his expectations.

Such experiences seemed to justify the philosophy on which he claims to have acted as deeming no human creature beneath his interest and his kindness ; for we find him exclaiming even of the earlier London sufferings : "Thank God ! even in those years I needed not the embellishments of novel accessories to conciliate my affections. Plain human nature, in its humblest and most homely apparel, was enough for me." He is full of sympathy ; his heart goes out at the slightest call of weakness, suffering, or grief ; and he invariably lifts the object to his own level, and surrounds it with the radiant light of his own sensibilities.

VI.

The wholly abnormal cast of his idiosyncrasy on one side is seen in the exceptional effects which opium produced upon him. Instead of the dreamy depression and sense of blankness which are generally experienced under its effects in the first instance, he acknowledges only a sensation of delight ; instead of compelling him to a dreamy solitude, it stimulated him to a more active and lively interest in the lot of others. When not used in great excess, it steadied his thoughts and concentrated them ; for it is very noticeable that in the periods when he chiefly complains of the electrical rapidity and rush of his thoughts being such that only one out of fifty

could he detain and write down, he was abstinent or almost abstinent.

It has been often remarked that the "Confessions" bear evidence of the exalted, idealised character due to opium, and that they are to be taken rather as the impressions of events seen through a vista of years, burdened with dream memories, than as a faithful record of facts and incidents. In one sense this is true; in another it is not. We believe that they are faithful to facts, so far as facts, in such a sensitively intellectual and imaginative nature, could be separated from the impressions produced by them. However much the matter-of-fact or scientific reader might desiderate clearer details on certain points, the ordinary common-sense is satisfied by the recurrence of brief episodes, which are presented with a Defoe-like sincerity and circumstantiality, as Charles Knight says, which convey or restore the impression of psychological or ideal faithfulness; and in this lies the writer's art. To De Quincey himself, deducting what he felt was due to the necessity of disguise, even in the later forms of the work, it was all in the strictest sense true. There was no conscious "elevation" or departure from fact. But one element, already hinted at, must be distinctly emphasised and here exhibited in some of its specific bearings. It is essential to De Quincey's freedom that he should be lifted above certain lines of thought, or even of perception, which would necessitate a recognition of material or merely sensuous elements for their own sake. He will not consent to view the fact in itself, and honestly confesses that his relation to the fact is the one essential. And so far he is egotistic; but egotistic only because his nature was framed for an ideal life. In all relations it is true that, as Mr. Hill Burton has said, pressing and immediate needs alone could extort from him the acknowledgment of a material world, and that only while the needs lasted. We see this as clearly in the "Confessions" as anywhere. Observe how the details which he gathers and crystallises round a series of leading incidents are in his view wholly subordinated to the dreams. All is from the first viewed

simply as leading up to them, and drawing such importance as they individually possess in his eyes from this fact. The only unity in his view is to be found in the dreams; and hence the sympathetic demand made upon the reader at the very outset, if justice is to be done to them in the reading. "The final object of the whole record," he says, "lay in the dreams. For the sake of these the entire narrative arose." The phantasy not only works in alliance with the logical faculty, but commands it, like a pilot who for the nonce supersedes the captain. So, too, when he distinctly tells that, though his physical sufferings were sometimes "appalling," he holds that his "greatest misfortune" was his failing to recover any trace of Ann of Oxford Street, and that his disease is studiously spoken of in general only. His physical sufferings, his hunger, his gnawing pains, all in effect pass from his memory in view of the one leading impression of that loss, which is thus exalted, and artistically finds its justification in the place accorded to her in the dreams. For the same reason it is that, though his sufferings are spoken of as inexpressible, and figures derived from the convulsions of nature—volcano, tempest, and earthquake—used to illustrate them, there is no attempt to discriminate strictly between the sufferings of the body and the sufferings of the mind. Even the thoughtful reader is apt to lose sight of the collateral record of specific disease that clearly runs along with this record of mental impressions, and to become oblivious of the fact that any such ever existed. And this the more that, mainly to relieve what would otherwise have been a monotonous and painful recital, he allows himself to slip into the use of the word "enjoyment" in reference to his opium-eating in a special sense. The very popularity of the "Confessions" has in this way come to bear against his character, when only one side of them is followed and the other ignored. If, for the moment, he permits himself to acknowledge his communicativeness of personal details, it is at once justified by an ulterior reason bearing on possibilities the most remote; while his apology must be taken to bear rather on his analysis of moods and

feelings than on his presentation of facts and outward details generally.

The tendency, so marked and prevailing, to ignore the outward and material in view of mental or ideal impressions, points to a possibility which, unless checked, as it was in his case, by nearly counterbalancing qualities, is apt to pass into morbid melancholy, if not into insanity itself. This is the susceptibility to fall under one overruling impression or train of thought, without the power to find checks to it in outward occurrences. We see it clearly in many incidents in the autobiographic sketches—in the trance by the side of his sister's corpse; in the confession that his brother's announcement that the inhabitants of his imaginary kingdom had tails like monkeys affected him as keenly as if it had been a real circumstance; we see it also in that complete prostration under sorrow at the death of little Katherine Wordsworth, and the illusions of the eye thence resulting. These are but extreme phases of that excessive abstraction and high-strung idealism which manifested themselves so powerfully in his writings, and might even be said, paradoxical as the remark may be thought, to have determined his political position. He was a Liberal by his sympathies, though a Tory in name. What he revolted against in ultra-Liberalism was its early alliance with a utilitarian and purely material purpose.

It is exceedingly characteristic of him that, in his close-thoughted essay on the "Political Parties of Modern England," he should endeavour to establish a necessity for the existence of the two great parties as complementary rather than as opposing or harshly exclusive, which they must seem to be when looked at from the accidental point of view, where merely temporary and *personal* elements prevail. But he sees a "spiritual principle" behind all this; and expresses his surprise that "interpretations so idle of the refined differences between two parties, arising in the very bosom of civilisation, and at the most intellectual era of the most intellectual of nations, —*interpretations so gross of differences so spiritual*,—could ever have been entertained by reflective men." The two

parties divide the functions of the Constitution ; but, in dividing these, they *still distribute their care over the whole*. Parties as depositories of principle he regards rather than parties as seekers of power ; and he holds, and shows by many instances, that in great crises their interests collide and harmonise to augment stability of institutions. The enormity of evil, he holds, has come by political depravity, when parties had become personal parties. They then need to be raised to the higher level of principle by national misfortune or crises.

VII.

Another striking point may be noted in connection with his idealising tendency. It is this, that although shy and sensitive in the extreme, shrinking from contact with artificial life in all its forms, he was remarkably fearless in the common sense of fear. His love of night-wandering might be taken to prove this, no less than his liking, that lay near to his innocently Bohemian propensity, for new surroundings. He was, in this sense, remarkably independent of circumstances : given quietude, he was almost anywhere at home. Mr. Charles Knight speaks of his being haunted by fears and imaginations ; but these almost invariably resulted from some contact with artificial life, from which his one healthful relief was escape to nature and solitude. On this point, Mrs. Baird Smith very well says :—

“There was one feature of my father’s character which deserves to be pointed out,—this was the demand for the excitement of fear. This used to account to us for a great many of his curious habits, and his exaggerated difficulties about petty matters. He was quite incapable of fear in the real sense of the word, so much so that he could not understand it in us as children or young people ; and when he was chilling our marrow with awesome stories of ghosts, murder, and mysteries, he only thought he was producing a luxurious excitement, though I can safely say I have never conquered the eerie terrors of those times. This enjoyment of the excitement of concealment and lurking enemies, &c., has always accounted to us in some measure for his positive dislike to having his

affairs looked into and set straight, and it is borne out by his settling down much like other people when the excitement became burthensome to him through growing years."

Added to all this, as has been said, was his habit of magnifying little daily difficulties into portentous evils from which he needed to escape. These traits, doubtless, had something to do with his change of lodgings in some instances; and, associated with a certain love of novelty and an almost childish liking for mystery in innocent matters, account for much which has been made unjustly to bear a sinister aspect. It needs to be clearly stated, too, that, notwithstanding the appearance of poverty in attire he always presented, he had been wise enough, after a certain date, to leave entirely in the hands of his wife, as he did later in the hands of his daughters, small annuities derived from legacies—first from his father, second from his uncle, Colonel Penson, and third from his mother. It was by these moneys chiefly that a comfortable home was maintained; so that at no period of his later years could it be said that he was either homeless or reduced to beggary or want of ordinary necessities. Through his own simplicity, unstinted generosity, and the mismanagement, or worse, of lawyers, a considerable part of what he had originally inherited at one time or other had been lost; but, happily, enough remained for this. And with reference to the years 1844-46 in particular, the sternest documents are existent to show that throughout the whole of that period he not only did not overdraw his account with *Tait's Magazine*, but that through these years a balance lay at his credit, and that sometimes his ordinary payments were allowed to remain in the cashier's hands for months after the dates on which they were due, by his failing to call or to apply for the money.

With his irrepressible passion for collecting books and papers, and his utter incapacity to assort them and to dispense with what was useless, we can easily understand how it came about that deposits of papers grew here and there—"snowing him up," as his phrase was—so that he could only betake himself elsewhere helplessly. In two cases, it is true that, owing to this, he found himself in

the hands of persons who, though they cleared out the papers and let the rooms to others, still maintained their claim upon him for the rent during long periods whilst the said papers remained in their custody. Among his letters we find a few memorials of such cases, quaintly amusing to us as we read them, though, doubtless, they were grave enough to him as he wrote them. But even here he did not fail to lighten up his statement of the question by that naïve humour which was so characteristic of him in all his difficulties. The following is part of a letter written to his daughter Emily in 1855, while she was on a visit to her sister, Mrs. Craig, in Ireland—Mrs. Craig being the “Maggy” referred to as likely to throw light on the distressing problem :—

“What caused my consternation was Miss M——’s demand of one hundred guineas ‘and upwards.’ It is true that I believe any such debt, even if ever due as to any fraction, to have (in the phrase of Roman Law) ‘prescribed.’ But—and this is the deadly drawback upon my consolation in that direction—she, this fatal Miss M——, *holds papers and books* of mine. I do not seriously urge this as the mortal sting of the case, because, if it is possible that I do or can really owe her the sum which she alleges, I would assuredly pay her, whether holding or *not* holding any such pledge. I know not how this is. Can Maggy throw any light upon it? Payments, in the meantime, such as I could, I have made to her; somewhere about ten guineas in the last three months.”

And if it should be of any interest to our readers to learn De Quincey’s own opinion of the family of that woman who has been represented as “tracking him from lodging to lodging” and seizing his papers, because of arrears of rent, we here subjoin it, in absolute confidence that all the point will thus be taken out of that foundationless, but hardly well-intended, bit of gossip. The letter was addressed to his daughters, and it need scarcely be said that his gentle nature would not have allowed him to write with such vehemence but under a sense of the greatest injustice :—

“That man who for years has persecuted me with claims of the most fantastic kind died on Friday last. It seems he was

utterly broken down by drink. But a new persecution has replaced the old one. Since Saturday his two sons have besieged me with applications the most violent for pecuniary aid in burying him. Their pride is dismally disturbed at the thought of his having a pauper's funeral. But, of course, I have refused to interfere. After being often dismissed, and for perhaps a dozen times reinstated at the earnest intercession of influential people, who could not resist the misery manifested by his ruined wife, he offended more than ever, and finally was solemnly discharged for ever. There went to wreck seventy guineas a year, on which, with *their* small family and his wife's economy, they might have lived in comfort. But not content with sacrificing *that*, he would not suffer his wife to obtain a livelihood by letting lodgings, such were the uproars that he kicked up every night. I suppose that a more absolute wreck of decent prosperity never can have been exemplified. Driven mad by ill-usage and something very like starvation, for all the furniture and clothes gradually disappeared at the pawnbroker's, she also took to drinking by fits and starts. Luckily she could not often obtain drink. But at times she *did* obtain it, and drank to excess. In one of those excesses it was that she fell backwards on the area steps of a house in George Square, and five or six days after (having been found by the police with her skull fractured) died in the infirmary, not recognising, I believe, anybody whatever up to the moment of her death."

VIII.

Of the religious vein, which had a close affinity with the high-strung idealism on which we have dwelt, much might be said. For the purely sceptical attitude he has no favour: it is, in his view, highly irrational, as discrediting the most authoritative voice, vested in man's higher nature.

Thus we see emerge out of a combination of faculties usually regarded as alien to it a warm interest in life in its varied aspects, vicarious sympathies, not to any degree artificialised as in Rousseau and egotists of his type by perverted sensibilities that have been fed by memory of prurient experiences. Nor in De Quincey do we see any submerging of the individual in a general haze of humanitarianism as is the tendency of sentimentalism, pure and

simple. His peculiar interest in humanity does not lessen his keenness of sympathy with individual cases. He has all an Englishman's love for getting at the fact, at the person. It is this keen individual interest that makes his dreams so touching, notwithstanding the atmosphere in which his great narrative moves.

And this leads us to a point where we must use and attempt to justify a certain phrase which, as we have hinted, will no doubt be felt at first to be somewhat startling in reference to De Quincey. This is the John Bull element which, incredible as it may appear, lay deep in De Quincey's nature, in association with all a dreamer's love of solitude, an erratic if still inoffensive vein of Bohemianism, and a speculative subtlety more like that of a German than of an Englishman. This John Bull element to a great extent sprang out of, and depended upon, his love of human nature in its uncorrupted simplicity. The poetic vein of sentiment, conjoined with deep reverence for ancient forms with which this most readily allies itself, tends inevitably to a certain conservatism of nature. De Quincey was thus far a conservative. And we must needs confess that he did not escape *some* of the prejudices which are common to all such natures. Taken on the side of sympathy, they are necessarily patriotic rather than cosmopolitan; and wide as may be their eclecticism and openness to new thought, as such, and eager as they may be for originality in any form, they are apt to have implicit confidence in the customs among which they have been reared. His devotion to the Church of England is to be accounted for rather on this ground than on that of a full acceptance of her formulas, or sympathy with any system that could give colour to the least claim of sacerdotalism. And the same reason may be given for some of his social preferences. One of his critics, indeed, makes good cause against him on this ground. After having condemned some of his views of French and German manners, the critic winds up:—"One cannot but regret that the vulgar prejudice of the old-fashioned John Bull should have been embodied in the pages of a master of our

language." But it is quite possible to put too rigid a construction on an isolated passage; and certainly De Quincey, in spite of his John Bullism, was sometimes inclined to deal as severely by certain elements in English life and manners as he could have done by anything French or German.

There was, however, one point on which he did not represent the John Bullism of his day; and therein he showed, as we think, a distinct forecast and anticipation of later social ameliorations. He did not believe in flogging in any form. He held to the principle that "all corporal punishments whatsoever, and upon whomsoever inflicted, are hateful, and an indignity to our common nature—enshrined in the person of the sufferer. . . . As man grows more intellectual, the power of managing him by his intellect and his moral nature, in utter contempt of all appeals to his mere animal instincts of pain, must go on *pari passu*." This is but one of the convictions in which he was confirmed, if indeed it was not created in him, by his contact with classes of people from whom men, bred in the classes he had been bred in, generally hold affectedly aloof.

His peculiar delight in crowds and demonstrations—a characteristic utterly unexpected, looking at him from the common point of view—might be cited not inaptly as another expression of this John Bullism, more especially as the intensity of the delight was invariably determined by some patriotic or other idea lying outside the mere concourse in itself. Many instances of this are to be met with in his various writings, and in letters. Particularly do we recall a most vigorous, and at the same time delicate and suggestive, description of the arrival of *Blucher* in London—a sight to which Lamb accompanied him.

And if he was faithful to a healthy John Bullism in this enthusiasm for patriotic crowds, he as certainly reflected it in his way of disposing, as if by anticipation, of the rights-of-woman theory, as seen particularly in one fine passage in the eloquent essay on "Joan of Arc!"

And with respect to the weakness of men in the regard they pay to the personal appearance of each other,

he makes a confession which certainly also breathes somewhat of the air of John Bullism, though we *might* regard it as having been in a measure fortified by purely personal considerations.

The personal point, indeed, obtrudes itself on one or two occasions in the course of his multifarious writings. For example, in defending himself from the possible charge that he had been tempted to slip into the recital of certain circumstances in relation to Dr. Parr in order to a disparagement of his personal appearance, he writes :—

“I, that write this paper, have myself a mean personal appearance ; and I love men of mean appearance. Having one spur more than other men to seek distinction in those paths where nature has not obstructed them, they have one additional chance (and a great one) for giving an extended development to their intellectual powers. Many a man has risen to eminence under the powerful reaction of his mind, in fierce counter-agency (sometimes even more nobly, in grand benignant indifference) to the scorn of the unworthy, daily evoked by his personal defects, who with a handsome person would have sunk into the luxury of a careless life under the tranquillising smiles of continual admiration.”

But, though a conservative by instinct, and a severe critic of manners, how easily, how gracefully, he can yield himself to the sentiment, from which at first manners derive their significance and value, but which by lapse of time too often dies out of them, to embody and justify itself in exceptional actions ! We have a striking instance of this in the dying words of Kant, when he called for his friend, with the wish, “that I should kiss him.”

IX.

Springing out of this John Bullism, too, we note a very active interest in the leading public movements of his day. He read the newspapers as regularly as any county member of Parliament, not resting content with political news merely, but passing down with most curious interest upon details, such as police-court reports, criminal trials, and so forth ; and he was wont to exercise his ingenuity

in trying to guess at the circumstances that had precipitated the offence, or in following up the divergent lines of evidence and bringing them all to one point, to trace and identify the criminal. That his knowledge of human affairs was very keen, and had been sharpened by dwelling much and often on the principles that lie behind the alternate courses of conduct possible in some of the more difficult affairs of daily life, is proved by his essay on "Casuistry," which, in its latter part, comes as near to laying down the true principle in certain very frequent domestic entanglements as any such writing could possibly do,—showing how very far indeed he was from living apart from any phase of human life ; and how, as his experience grew more mature, the habit of never letting go a detail till he had ranged it under a principle was trained and strengthened. Had this not been so, he certainly could not have written that article on "Casuistry."

But if any further proof were needed of the justness of his claim to be a philosopher—one to whom nothing that concerned human nature was without interest—we might make extract of that sagacious passage, showing the bearing that the temperance movement has upon good cookery—a point that deserves, even at this day, all the emphasis such an authority can give it. Bad cookery and neglect of exercise, he holds, are the two chief inducing reasons for the increasing love of alcohol. He is grave enough in his view of the evil, but his ready sympathy with acute and morbid forms of suffering from appetite is enough to enable him to relieve the treatment by airy gleams of humour, and indeed to poetise it as we scarcely thought such a subject could be poetised.

Not less keen was his concern for those great national developments on which individual well-being and freedom so much depend ; for, as we have said already, whilst he was a conservative by name and attachment, he was by sentiment and sympathy a liberal, owing chiefly to his excessive respect for the individual will, which, as we have seen, led him, unlike the genuine conservative of his day, to oppose on principle any and every form of corporal punishment. His proneness to see a common

nature underlying every possible abnormal manifestation precluded him from being in the specific sense a Tory, or, indeed, a party man. It was characteristic of him to note as a defect in Charles Lamb's character (with which he otherwise was so fully in sympathy), that "he had no ears for the cannon of Waterloo." De Quincey himself was, to use two words from Milton's "Comus," "all ear" for these voices in the interludes of his rapt self-communings, which seemed only to give them the deeper effect when they were heard. And not only so. Few men have been able to combine with dreamy meditateness and speculative power an interest in contemporary affairs so eager, and so exact and detailed a knowledge of the various influences and counter-influences, out of which our present constitution and our political life have grown. To read some articles on De Quincey, one would gather that, if he was anything but a dreamer, he was a mere bookworm, deeply devoted to Greek; and more inclined to squabble over an accent or a favourite reading than to possess himself of the spirit of the author. Whereas in political and social matters, precisely as in literature, he had no regard for the past as the past, save as it aided to enlighten the present.

And precisely as the facts of history—in which his remarkably retentive memory made him *facile princeps*—were regarded by him as of value in the degree in which they aided a solution of the problems of the day; so exactly with literature—the classics were with him of value only as they could yield commentary on the greater literature (as he held it) of his own land. He has been called pedantic; but with slight reason. If his mode of speech might sometimes savour overmuch of classical reference, his spirit was anti-pedantic. He regarded it as a peculiar privilege that in early life all his sensibilities had been laid hold of by the greatness of our own literature; and his whole influence was given to upholding its proper place, and to reducing, by all legitimate means, the overweening favour felt in high places for the Greek and Latin authors. "It is, indeed, a pitiable spectacle," he says in one place, "to any man of sense and feeling who

happens to be really familiar with the golden treasures of his own ancestral literature, and a spectacle which moves alternately scorn and sorrow, to see young people squandering their time and painful study upon writers not fit to unloose the shoe's latchet of many amongst their own compatriots; making painful and remote voyages after the drossy refuse, when the pure gold lies neglected at their feet."

Devoted as he was to Homer, at one place he exclaims: "Show me a piece of Homer's handiwork that comes within a hundred leagues of that divine prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, or of the *Knight's Tale*, or *The Man of Law's Tale*, or of the *Tale of the Patient Griseldis*." He makes bold to hint at the not very creditable reason for this affected and exaggerated preference:—"As must ever be the case with readers not sufficiently master of a language, to bring the true pretensions of a work to any test of *feeling*, they are for ever mistaking for some pleasure conferred by the writer what is in fact the pleasure naturally attached to the sense of a difficulty overcome." And to this very acute and explicit passage, which could never have come from the pen of one who was not an independent thinker as well as a great Grecian, he adds this note:—"There can be no doubt that this particular mistake has been a chief cause of the vastly exaggerated appreciation of much that is mediocre in Greek literature."

Even in the lower range of eloquence and rhetoric, he sees reason to magnify our own English authors. Where among the writers of Greece or Rome, he asks, will you find anything to match the opening passage of Sir Thomas Browne's *urn-burial*, beginning, "Now, since these bones have rested quietly in the grave, under the drums and tramplings of three conquests," &c. ?

He may be right or wrong in his opinion here—that is another matter altogether; his opinion, so expressed, is enough for illustration of our present position.

X.

Notwithstanding De Quincey's remarkably quick perceptions of natural beauty, and his dependence on the

suggestion of various outward manifestations for the full return of certain moods, at once the deepest and most evanescent, he has given us few descriptions of nature proper and for its own sake. He loves to look at nature through a veil of human association. This may often be of the most gossamery nature; but there assuredly it is, constantly diverting his eye from the more prominent objects in the landscape. Even the human interest that lies in a name will divert him. In the opening of the *Essay on Bentley* we have what promises to be an exquisite picture of Watenlath in Cumberland; but it all too soon reveals itself—that the little sketch was introduced in a really original way, to point an old moral, that in the loveliest scenes

“Man alone is vile.”

And yet he is no cynic; it is the gentler emotions, the better passions, that he loves to show forth, and he is drawn into such reflections by the stern call of truth. Though not a “word-painter,” as the common idea runs, he is full of suggestions on the true moods in which to enjoy nature, and on their cultivation. At one place, for example, he says very wisely:—“It is of great importance for the enjoyment of any natural scene, to be liberated from the necessity of viewing it under circumstances of haste and anxiety; to have it in one’s power to surrender one’s self passively and tranquilly to the influences of the objects as they gradually reveal themselves; and to be under no summons to crowd one’s whole visual energy and task of examination within a single quarter of an hour.”

XI.

We have spoken of the dependence of De Quincey’s sensibilities on certain sensuous gratifications; and this leads us to speak shortly of his exceeding delight in the pleasures of the ear, and his opium-eating—two points the more demanding notice from us in that both have left unmistakable manifestations in his writings.

I. His exceeding care for cadence in his writing, in any

movement the least impassioned, shows a distinct and special artistic instinct. His "poetic prose" is in the good, and not in the sinister, sense musical—that is, it moves by defined gradations, and rests on a distinct principle of opposition of clauses, giving balance and harmony. This effect might be formally gained as the result of mere study; but the peculiarity of De Quincey's case is, that here instinct went hand-in-hand with rule, and his style submits and harmonises itself, as we have said, with the motive or scale of impressions to be interpreted. To those who are able to appreciate this point, which, however, requires at once an originally musical ear, and long tutoring to the survey of sentences in their structural wholeness, it will hardly seem too much to modify and apply to himself the words he applied to another—"The strife and fluctuation of his thoughts and emotions in the grander of his opium-dreams maintain their alternations with a force and inevitable recurrence, like the systole and diastole, the contraction and expansion, of some living organ." That we are not wrong in this might almost be proved by the fact that, implicitly in his judgment of style, the musical element was the one that he was first affected by. It was this which had drawn him to Coleridge, which had, when he was yet a mere boy, made the study of Euripides a luxury to him. It was the one thing that he desiderated in Lamb and in his writings; and though it must be confessed that, like his hesitancy of speech, the jerky and unbalanced nature of Lamb's writing, irregular and without structure as it was, in some indefinable way aided his peculiar wit, coming as it did for the most part suddenly, and in separate flashes; yet the least sense of music would have certainly led him to impart somewhat more of variety to his essays in point of mere sentence-structure.

And nothing was with De Quincey limited in its interest of application to literature merely. It is here the case with the pleasures of the ear, as we have already found it to be with many other things, as brought out more especially in his tribute to the silvery tinkle of the sheep-bells on the Quantock and Mendip Hills.

The influence of music, as it affected his literary pro-

duct, is indeed manifest; and to trace it out fully would require at once great sympathy and the nicest knowledge of technical points. That lies beyond our capability; but we may, we think, quite justifiably insert under this head his own confession of his dependence on musical association and suggestion:—

“A chorus of elaborate harmony, displayed before me, as in a piece of arras work, the whole of my past life—not as if recalled by an act of memory, but as if present, and incarnated in the music: no longer painful to dwell upon: but the detail of its incidents removed, or blended in some hazy abstraction; and its passions exalted, spiritualised, and sublimed.”

As the power of gratifying this peculiar musical appetite was made possible to him in the London opera at a time when the opium experiences were passing through a transforming phase, we are surely not passing beyond the region of sound criticism into that of mere conjecture when we suggest, whether it might not be that something of his exceptional experience of opium in preserving the moral affections in a state of clearness and elevation might not be due in some degree to this sensibility to musical impression, happily gratified at a critical time.

The peculiar power of the ear for the musical affinities of words, and the subtle processes of association by remoter analogies, were, as we take it, the main elements in his wonderful memory. We notice this point here, because we are not sure that the musical element was not the more efficient element of the two in this remarkable result. Even his tenacious record of dates, the reader will have noticed, was not the outcome of mere memory, but rather the flower of an imaginative process by which certain sounds actually became the symbols of memorable events—the eighteenth of June, the glorious day of Waterloo, the twenty-first of October, the memorable day of Trafalgar, and so on—the very sounds carrying with them imperishable and great suggestions. He, at all events, would not have deemed himself complimented had he been praised for a vast Jedidiah-Buxton-like memory for figures, facts, or words.

The very word “guardian,” he confesses in another

place, kindles a fiery thrilling in his nerves ; so much was that special power of guardianship, as wielded by one of four, concerned in the sole capital error of his boyhood.

II. We now pass to the consideration of opium in relation to De Quincey's mind and character. Whether or not we may be disposed to qualify somewhat his assertions of the early awakening in his childhood of sensibilities and ideas that in normal cases lie latent till early adolescence, if in some cases they are ever properly developed at all, there can be no doubt whatever that his imagination and the whole range of his poetic perceptions were awakened whilst he was yet a mere child of four or five at most. Ideas of time, of life, of death, and their ineffable mysteries, had even thus early, in opposition to Wordsworth's teaching, surged in upon his dawning intelligence. Unlike Hawthorne in many things, he was certainly like him in this, that "his fancy ripened prematurely, and taught him secrets he could not otherwise have known." His circumstances were such as to repress the tendency rather than to encourage it. True, he expresses his gratitude that he was mostly brought up amidst gentle sisters rather than among rough brothers ; but how generally is this position only taken advantage of by a healthy thoughtless boy that he may play the petty tyrant with impunity ! But if he had been constitutionally less sensitive, less premature, that slight experience of tyranny from his elder brother might have awakened in him something wholly different from that "passion for being despised" of which he tells us ; and his mother's severe, Puritanic habit of mind, which had been confirmed by contact with members of the Clapham sect, and by the reading of the literature most in fashion amongst them, would certainly have tended to form a very different style of character, had not the native direction of his energies been as decided as they were in quality delicate. That reverence for the individual will which we have seen operating in his boyhood, and driving him—the very gentlest of boys—to face the desolateness of Wales and the hunger of London rather than yield himself up on his guardian's terms, betokens a peculiar self-depend-

ence in certain directions. Now, where such elements of determination are present, the inevitable result of early acquiescence in the ordinary and formal regulations of life is to obliterate the vague and early dreams of beauty and wonder which may be presumed to be common to childhood, however early they may be erased in the consciousness—a point which the “Ode to Childhood” may be said to have made a commonplace, though, in one sense, it is but a revived Platonism. Had De Quincey proceeded to Oxford at the time he wished, instead of going to Manchester, his whole life might have taken a different development. Very strong indeed must be the character which could resist the attractive power of the current of undergraduate life. To live apart from it how were it possible for a youth, unless indeed he brought with him the weight of outward experiences as strange and anomalous as anything De Quincey had dreamed? Before he had finished his first year at Oxford—a year of isolation and great suffering, as he tells us—he had tasted opium in the hope of relief from neuralgic pains. Under its influence the whole of his infancy revived itself, even in his waking consciousness. According to his own account of his earlier experiences, the opium, as it purified the moral affections, elevated the imagination, gave to it also a larger scope, a power to re-create the experiences and phantasies of infancy, already becoming dim. It is noticeable that he distinctly tells us the first revelations of opium at Oxford were solely of this character. And though, under the necessary pains that emerge from the indulgence of anything in excess, these came to be complicated and mixed up with other impressions, yet a certain law and order prevail, which do for them precisely what the application of the most rigid law of art would have done—and that results simply from the central idea of childhood, and its purity and love and mystery, obtaining everywhere. The constant emergence of the death-chamber of his little sister, and of Ann of Oxford Street, imparts a sweet, near, natural, and also a grand semi-mystic air; and it is to this, as we have said, that the general influence of these dreams of

De Quincey is mainly due. Let no reader suppose that we justify opium indulgence. *Far from it.* We here speak of the effect of opium only in its earlier stages, and before it was used by him to counteract the evils which had been originated by itself. And let no man fancy that the use of opium will make him a glorious dreamer, or inspire him with poetry. What we say is, that it may help a man of deep sensibilities, and with the dreaming propensity profoundly vested in his constitution, to revive more clearly in the consciousness what else had almost faded out of it, as Mr. James Montgomery says; and this it did in De Quincey's case. We are now merely trying to trace out and estimate what we may regard as due to the "ministry of opium" in the body of dream literature which De Quincey has left to us; and this, we presume to think, comes pretty near to it. The cloudy grandeur; the mystic and far-withdrawn beauty of his imagery; the presence of the most ideal forms along with the almost pathetic counter-presence of the most real forms, transmuted and spiritualised, yet real and recognisable,—this is the chief peculiarity of these earlier dreams, and the opium influence is, we think, traceable in it. This it is that gives them such power over readers generally, dimly awakening in their consciousness the echo, as it were, of a sweet, distant, long-forgotten strain, which it may be they have only hitherto heard in sleep, but which sets an indefinable charm even about the ways of that secret life for many days. This is of the essence of poetic impression, and so far as we derive these impressions from De Quincey, we are compelled to regard him as at least in near alliance with poets like Keats and Shelley, Chénier and Schiller.

If De Quincey was right in attributing to the rough treatment of his brother a beneficial awakening and withdrawal from his dreamy seclusion, we may perhaps attribute to the circumstances which led him to opium the more efficient revival of those earlier impressions of a dream-world beyond the actual and tangible, and apart from it, which were in some danger of fading from his mind under rude contact with the world. The slaves in

the West Indies considered death as a passport to their native country: dream was the one doorway by which De Quincey could pass into his native land of childish phantasy. Opium, at first at all events, reconciled what the rude usage had dispelled, or threatened to dispel; and whatever may fall to be urged against opium in the abstract, and *taken in the great excess into which both De Quincey and Coleridge were tempted*, it would ill become any one who prizes the special quality of the gift either has brought to us from the dim land of dream to look at them only with the eye of the stern moralist when they yielded too deeply to the seduction of that potent drug, which soothed not only sensitive shattered nerves, but had once so recomposed them as to become the agent of elevating delights for us and for future generations. De Quincey himself has well traced out the co-efficient causes:—"He who has *really* read the 'Confessions' will be aware that a stricter scrutiny of the past, such as was natural after the whole economy of the dreaming faculty had been convulsed beyond all precedents on record, led me to the conviction that not one agency, but two agencies, had co-operated to the tremendous result. The nursery experience had been the ally and the natural co-efficient of the opium. For that reason it was that the nursery experience has been narrated. Logically it bears the same relation to the convulsions of the dreaming faculty as the opium. The idealising tendency existed in the dream-theatre of my childhood; but the preternatural strength of its action and colouring was first developed after the confluence of the *two* causes." And he elsewhere adds:—"The minutest incidents of childhood were often revived. I could not be said to recollect them; for, if I had been told of them when waking, I should not have been able to acknowledge them as parts of my past experience. But, placed as they were before me in dreams like intuitions, and clothed in all their evanescent circumstances and accompanying feelings, I *recognised* them instantaneously."

One word we must add here. To us it seems as though both the experiences bred of the rough usage which com-

pelled him to a sense of the stern qualities of the real world, and the experiences bred of the opium by which he reopened for himself the gate of dreams, were necessary to produce the character—so shrewd and so kindly, yet so solitary and full of sorrow; so radiant of sympathy and sensitive to the finest thrill of emotion, yet so unaffected by many forms of sympathy; with so keen an eye for many of the problems of life, and so able to lay down rules for action, yet himself so incapable of action under any practical rule; and exhibiting at every point that gentleness and benign intelligence which usually proceed only from large and wise commerce with mankind, built on a foundation of genial nature and deep-rooted good sense.

There is yet another point which may, not unfitly, be noticed here. During the most absorbing succession of images his intellect, as it were, takes up a station apart, carefully observes and compares. He is at once creative and self-analysing. Those elusive and impalpable shades of feeling which most men remember but can in nowise define—those images which seem only half-born, and which flit in a debatable land, like the mystic state between sleeping and waking—were with De Quincey definite realities which he could deal with, recalling and representing them almost at will. If his life, as has been said in a certain place, were all a dream or a vision, it was a dream which he made real to himself by his power to reconstruct it. And the interest of the phenomenon is increased when we come to perceive that the intellect employed in this service lost thereby little of its edge for dealing with a certain order of practical relations—as seen in his passion for political economy, not to speak of other matters.

Somewhat to our surprise, we find him confessing that in his youth he laboured under a singular inability to express his thoughts to his satisfaction—another reason, it may be, why he eschewed the ordinary student-society at Oxford. He says that his infirmity in this respect was a cause of great regret to himself; and we are led to infer that the development of his rare powers of expression was a new source of pleasure. And what was true of

conversation was true also of writing. "I laboured," he says, "like a sibyl instinct with the burden of prophetic woe, as often as I found myself dealing with a topic in which the understanding combined with deep feeling to suggest mixed and tangled thoughts." We have no direct statement from himself as to the effect which was produced upon him in this respect by opium; but, as it was admitted by all that his conversation in the earlier years was far more brilliant while he was under that stimulus, it may be that he also owed something to the opium in the full development of the power of language—that instinct for nicer shades and keen capacity to draw tribute from the commonest and most ordinary phrases. Indeed, his confession, which is so expressive of something absolutely original in character, that even under opium he felt impelled to go out and mix with the crowds of common people in the thronged thoroughfares of London, might, we think, without violence to his own acknowledgments, be brought into a closer relation with a confession he made elsewhere, as showing how, even in the common speech, he found a constant tonic, like iron, for the blood of literature, to check the fantasticality and wire-drawn refinements to which it is constantly exposed in the hands of professed writers and rhetoricians merely. "The market-place and the highway," he says, "are rich seed-plots for the sowing and reaping of many indispensable ideas." And this from the man who has been treated as a writer of gorgeous dictionary-English and impassioned prose only!

Another point naturally arises here, on which a word may be said. It is that of conscience in literature. This is shown in De Quincey's case by the care with which all the sensational and active effects that accompanied his dream-experiences in the very crises were followed and analysed, and the concern he exhibits that no statement should pass until it had undergone this kind of "verification." What has surprised the most careful readers is this,—that in a species of writing which might yield itself so easily to mere fanciful "filling up," the continual return on actual events, incidents, and characters should

not seem inconsistent or out of place. It is hardly possible that any mere "invention" could have supplied the links of association. The inner life would have been uninteresting from its very remoteness from any ordinary standard, had it not been, for most part, and by deliberate purpose, presented in combination with outward facts and influences which constantly affected and modified it. And this was largely accomplished by the emergence of ordinary sympathies, which linked the life of outer circumstance and the inner experiences together. We see this in his love of children, his pity for the forlorn, and his power of sympathetically placing himself in the position of others. Even his most exceptional experiences take their rise in feelings and sentiments that have *universal* significance and suggestion,—as witness the trance by his sister's corpse, his delusions resulting from his grief for little Kate Wordsworth, and many others. And though his natural tendency is to throw mere outward and material circumstances out of account, the very manner in which he is compelled thus to recognise them in his most elevated moments gives a unity and a convincing sense of reality, felt the more that we realise his natural repulsion from what pertains solely to that which is physical, sensuous, or outward.

The primary condition of success in the kind of dreaming to which De Quincey lays claim is an underlying purity and detachment from the ordinary desires and appetites, if we must admit that it needs to be stimulated by the gratification of appetites peculiar to itself. The distinctive note of De Quincey's dreams is, that while they betray all the longing for solitude on which the phantasy or dreaming faculty so much depends, they indicate also an unusual width of sympathy, readiness to accept the poor and forlorn and repulsive *for their own sakes*, and to find redeeming and beautiful elements in them. This accounts for the place which Ann of Oxford Street holds in the opium-dreams; for the abiding impression made on De Quincey's mind by the two deaf idiot girls—"Strulldbrugs"—who were held to menial offices by the wife of one of his early teachers; and for

the reappearance so persistently in his opium-dreams at one stage of the poor Malay, to whom in pity for his miserable plight he had given some opium. It is the almost unique infusion of kindly dramatic human elements into these dreams—belonging, as such usually do, to a class which yield themselves to pure revelment among shadows of the fancy—that gives them their transcendent power to move us; and this element could hardly have consisted with the sense of abandoned self-enjoyment or prurient vice in the experience of the dreamer.

Even in that unique piece of prose-poetry, "The Three Ladies of Sorrow," it is the sense of personal contact, of fullest share in all forms of human woe, that imparts the fascination—the imagination only translates into fitting terms facts of experience, as the writer holds himself the mere translator of their symbols into words. The keynote is struck well with the opening sentences: "I know them thoroughly, and have walked in all their kingdoms. Three sisters they are, of one mysterious household, and their paths are wide apart; but of their dominion there is no end. Them I saw often conversing with Levana, and sometimes about myself. Do they talk, then? Oh no! Mighty phantoms like these disdain the infirmities of language."

With this thought before us, we can the more clearly see the special mission of such minds as De Quincey's. It is simply to revive those rarer instincts and emotions as real and pervading forces in human life, without the sense of which a man is lop-sided, imperfect, void of sympathy, a creature of narrow and limited view. If he personally suffered by the emergence of phantasy and the dreaming power, his clear and penetrating intellect, which rested in kindly union with them, enabled him often to draw from his adverse circumstances the most impressive pictures whereby to deepen the colours, and, as it were, to heighten the architecture of his dreams; and we are the gainers by his loss, and must follow him with some sympathy in his more matter-of-fact narratives, if we would faithfully estimate the truth that underlies them.

A recent writer in the *Cornhill Magazine*, after a most

careful analysis of the "Psychology of Dreams," as it would appear, supports this idea when, in summing up, he writes :—

"It seems almost as if during sleep we returned to the undeveloped mental condition of infancy, with the single difference that our emotions are more various and our images are furnished by a larger field of experience. It has been urged by more than one writer, with a good deal of plausibility, that dreams are representations of a primordial state of intelligence and mental development, as we see it now in children."

And perhaps Nathaniel Hawthorne, when, in his later days, he penned that subtle passage in which he found that Dr. Dolliver, in spite of all his aches and pains, still dreamed the dream of childhood and youth, had much the same idea in view.

XII.

And with regard to opium, though he fell into sad abuse of it, and suffered for this abuse, it is evident that without it, at all events, he could have accomplished nothing. In a sense, it was at once bane and antidote.

Taken as medicine, opium was De Quincey's mainstay—the only food that his delicate system not infrequently could receive. Writing to an old schoolfellow in his later years, he said that he had not eaten a dinner since parting with him in the eighteenth century. And while he frankly confesses the evils that excesses in opium had wrought upon him, he deliberately records his conviction, in the later years of his life, that but for it he would have been in his grave thirty years before. As to opium in itself, and taken in due limit, he will acknowledge nothing save benefit; but he regards himself as deeply wronged when it is suggested as possible that his "Confessions" had had an alien influence in leading young men to become opium-eaters.

Taking this in connection with his deliberate statement in the final form of the "Confessions," published in 1856, we can only conclude that, on maturer deliberation,

and yet fuller experience, he modified the view we have referred to so far as to return to his earlier idea that a moderate indulgence in his case was necessary even to sustain life. His whole case suggests, indeed, that he suffered from chronic gastrodynia—attested, as it seems to be, by the gnawing pains in the stomach, his incapacity for solid food, even in very small quantity, and his nervous horror, which only opium could relieve.* This view seems to gain support from his own statement in that letter to Miss Mitford, where he thus meets the suggestion that his nervous sufferings might be some horrible recoil from the long habit of using opium to excess:—

“This seems improbable,” he says, “for more reasons than one ; because previously to any *considerable* abuse of opium—viz., in the year 1812—I had suffered an unaccountable attack of nervous horror, which lasted for five months, and went off in one night, as unaccountably as it had first come on, in one second of time. I was at the time perfectly well ; was at my cottage in Grasmere, and had just accompanied Mr. Grosvenor Bedford, an old friend of Southey’s, round the Lake district.”

We find him saying in an earlier writing than this :—

“The fact is, that *twice* I mastered it, and by efforts even more prodigious in the second of these cases than in the first. But one error I committed in both. I did not connect with the abstinence from opium, so trying to the fortitude under *any* circumstances, that enormity of exercise which (as I have since learned) is the one sole resource for making it endurable. I overlooked, in those days, the one *sine qua non* for making the triumph permanent. Twice I sank, twice I rose again. A third time I sank, partly from oversight as to exercise, partly from other causes, on which it avails not now to trouble the reader. I could moralise, if I chose ; and perhaps *he* will moralise, whether I choose it or not. But, in the meantime, neither of us is acquainted properly with the circumstances of the case ; I, from natural bias of judgment, not altogether acquainted ; and he (with his permission) not at all.”

* See Appendix,—“Medical View of De Quincey’s Case.”

And in the latest writing of all in which he touches on the subject of opium, he tells us :—

“After I had become a regular opium-eater, and from mismanagement had fallen into miserable excesses in the use of opium, I did, nevertheless, four several times contend against and renounce it ; renounced it for long intervals ; and finally resumed it upon the warrant of my enlightened and deliberate judgment, 'as being of two evils by very much the least. In this I acknowledge nothing that calls for excuse.”

There are some contradictions in the later edition of the “Confessions,” arising from the fact that several expressions used, or rather allowed to stand from the first edition, give the idea that he had effected a complete and final escape from opium (which was quite true at the moment he penned the words for the earlier edition), whereas, on his own clear confession, he indulged, with the exception of some rare and short intervals, which we have noted, the habit in moderate degree to the close of his life. He has even been charged with congratulating himself on his escape from opium while he was actually dropping the “seductive fluid” into his glass, but what De Quincey there meant was escape from its excess or tyranny ; what he was taking at these moments being in his idea merely a medical dose.*

* But on this subject see note from the present writer in Dr. R. Garnett's “Confessions of an English Opium-Eater,” pp. 264-268.



APPENDIX.



I.

A MEDICAL VIEW OF MR. DE QUINCEY'S CASE.

BY SURGEON-MAJOR W. C. B. EATWELL, M.D., F.L.S.,

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MANY years have now elapsed since I first read the "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater," by Thomas de Quincey; and apart from the question of the psychological condition of the gifted author of the book, apart from the ethical question involved in his inordinate use, or, as must be admitted, abuse of opium, there arose in my mind certain medical considerations of no small interest and importance, which I will now briefly state. I came to the conclusion that, De Quincey had for a great period of his life suffered from a terrible and distressing affection of the gastric nerves called gastrodynia; and that to this more or less purely neuralgic affection was superadded an inflammatory condition, probably with ulceration (chronic gastric ulcer) of the mucous membrane of the stomach; and that, whatever might have been the degree of abuse of opium, this drug had in reality been the means of preserving and prolonging life. I have characterised this affection of the gastric nerves as a terrible and distressing affection, and I will explain my reasons for having done so. At the time to which I am alluding I was a medical officer in the Indian army, and during my experience of several years in medical charge of a civil station and district in Bengal I met with a large number of these cases of gastrodynia, the disease exhibiting itself (as I shall explain more fully subsequently) in a peculiarly aggravated form amongst the rice-eating

inhabitants of Bengal, and driving the unfortunate sufferers very frequently to the commission of suicide.

About the same period there appeared in the medical journals of London a series of papers by Dr. Brinton, calling attention to the specific characters of gastric ulcer, and indicating opium as pre-eminently the remedy for its cure. I believe that these circumstances tended to impress the medical aspects of De Quincey's case on my mind at the moment, and subsequent events have caused it to be renewed in my recollection. My attention for some years after quitting my appointment in Bengal was specially directed to opium, from the fact of my having, as civil surgeon of Ghazee-pore, been entrusted with the duties of opium examiner to the Benares Opium Agency.*

It is by no means easy to gain, from the writings of Thomas de Quincey, information sufficiently definite to enable one to state his case clearly, in its medical aspects. The man is so intensely intellectual, so little of a materialist, that when he does condescend to allude to bodily symptoms, it is only in a general way, and rather with a view of dwelling on their bearing on his mental condition, or on their consequences, than for the purpose of exciting sympathy and interest, by depicting the material phenomena attending his state of disease. Indeed, some of the most significant medical facts in his "Confessions" and "Autobiographic Sketches" are only mentioned parenthetically, whilst others of the highest importance in their medical bearing are altogether omitted.

In order, however, to form an opinion of De Quincey's case, in any degree satisfactory, it is essential to take a very broad view of it; and it is impossible to separate the phenomema of his bodily ailments from the mental manifestations which accompanied them—manifestations which dated even from early childhood, and which had their origin in constitutional and hereditary predispositions. I proceed, therefore, to consider, in the first place, the hereditary predispositions which may have determined the peculiar idiosyncrasies, bodily and mental, of Thomas de Quincey.

The father of De Quincey died at the age of thirty-nine of consumption, after having spent many years in southern climates, in the vain hope of averting the malady. His eldest sister, Jane, died at the age of three and a half years, the cause of her death not being given in the "Autobiography."

His second sister, Elizabeth, appears to have been a remarkable girl. De Quincey speaks of her "mature intellectual grandeur;" and of her head, for its "superb development," being "the astonish-

* From the spring of 1842 to the spring of 1845 I was on active service in China, with Sir Hugh (afterwards Lord) Gough's Expedition during the so-called Opium War. My Journal, kept at that time, contains the severest condemnation of that war, on the score of justification; but no cases then came under my notice of any evil effects on the Chinese generally from the use of opium, or they would certainly have been recorded by me.

ment of science." This sister was carried off of at the age of nine by hydrocephalus; and in this we see the hereditary tendency from the father acting on the child, as the disease was probably due to tubercular meningitis, the tubercular poison being deposited in the brain of the child. At this time, it might have been apprehended that a tendency to specific cerebral disease, similar to that developed in the sister, might have been looked for in the brother, so precocious did the intellect of the young boy appear, and so similar in its emotional and imaginative character was it to that of the deceased sister. Is it possible that the hereditary tendency to tuberculosis in Thomas de Quincey, which in infancy might have attacked the brain, as in the case of the sister, and later in life might have shown itself in the lungs, could have been held in check by any agencies extraneous to the system? In his "Confessions" (pp. 245-247) De Quincey writes as follows:—"At the commencement of my opium career, I had myself been pronounced repeatedly a martyr-elect to pulmonary consumption." "Without something like a miracle in my favour, I was instructed to regard myself a condemned subject." "These opinions were pronounced by the highest authorities in Christendom, viz., the physicians at Clifton and the Bristol hot wells." "Out of eight children I was the one who most closely inherited the bodily conformation of a father who had died of consumption at the early age of thirty-nine." "I offered at the first glance to a medical eye every symptom of phthisis broadly and conspicuously developed. The hectic colours in the face, the nocturnal perspirations, the growing embarrassment of the respiration, and other expressions of gathering feebleness under any attempts at taking exercise, all these symptoms were steadily accumulating between the age of twenty-two and twenty-four." De Quincey then goes on to say that all these symptoms were "arrested" by "the use, continually becoming more regular, of opium," and that he finally effected so absolute a conquest over all preliminary symptoms as could not have failed to fix on him "the astonishment of Clifton." Now, without offering any opinion of my own on this point, I will content myself with the following quotation from Dr. Brinton's book on "Ulcer of the Stomach," as having special reference to the case of De Quincey, as I am disposed to view it, both as regards his hereditary tendency to tuberculosis and to the condition of his stomach. Dr. Brinton writes (page 143), "I am anxious specially to urge upon the profession the importance of giving opium in this dangerous and frequent disease (ulcer of the stomach), with just the same views as those with which I suspect it has long been employed in phthisis."

But I have already mentioned that there were certain manifestations in infancy which appeared to indicate that the brain might then have suffered from tubercular disease, as in the case of the sister; and it may be asked whether there were any agencies operating to keep this tendency in check at that early period. In the "Autobiographic Sketches" it is affirmed that Thomas de Quincey suffered from ague during the second and third years of

his infancy, and it is quite possible that the impoverishment of the blood under the malarious poison may have rendered it less stimulating to the nervous centres, at that age specially sensitive, and have thus, to some extent, saved the brain. What gives colour to this hypothesis is the circumstance that some of the older physicians (Doctors Wells, Cleghorn, Weekes, Harrison, &c.), who wrote about the end of the last century and the beginning of the present, maintained that there were facts to show that the malarious poison of ague was antagonistic to the development of consumption. Although the proposition of these writers was subsequently controverted, Dr. Copland does not hesitate to say that, "from several facts with which I am acquainted, it is not quite devoid of truth." *

I am not aware that any other of the brothers and sisters suffered from tubercular disease, but enough has been advanced to indicate that Thomas de Quincey showed decided evidences of a predisposition in that direction. I now pass to the mental and moral peculiarities of Thomas de Quincey; merely alluding to the description of his three brothers, as given in the "Autobiographic Sketches," as showing that each presented a marked individuality of character, doubtless dependent more or less on inherited physical constitution, and indicating some constitutional impatience, which rendered them more or less intolerant of control. The mental and moral peculiarities of Thomas de Quincey himself showed themselves at a very early age, even in infancy; and it is impossible not to see that the influences brought to bear on him by his sister Elizabeth, in his earliest years, affected De Quincey's conduct throughout life. The first chapter in the "Autobiographic Sketches," in which the years of early childhood, the influence of his sister Elizabeth and her death, are described, is a composition of wonderful beauty in every sense. In it De Quincey says that if he should return thanks to Providence for all the separate blessings of his early situation, he would single out as worthy of special commemoration that he "lived in rustic solitude;" "that this solitude was in England;" that his infant feelings "were moulded by the gentlest of sisters, and not by horrid pugilistic brothers;" finally, "that I and they were dutiful and loving members of a pure, holy, and magnificent Church."

The beloved sister dies, and the shock to the sensitive heart of the brother is great. He manages surreptitiously to obtain access to the chamber in which is his sister's corpse, and when there, falls evidently into a condition of cataleptic ecstasy. He says: "I have reason to believe that a *very* long interval had elapsed during this wandering or suspension of my perfect mind;" but the vision present to his imagination during this state is nevertheless detailed in a passage of singular beauty, and it deserves to be carefully noted, as it proves how morbidly active was the imagination at this early age of six years, and how unnecessary it is to attribute to the

* Copland's "Medical Dictionary," p. 1147.

action of opium at a subsequent period that which may be ascribed to an abnormally exalted imagination. This vision or illusion took a firm hold of the imagination for some time, and was repeated in after-years.

After his sister's death the bereaved boy withdrew himself as much as possible into retirement. "All day long, when it was not impossible for me to do so, I sought the most silent and sequestered nooks in the grounds, about the house, or in the neighbouring fields." "At this time, and under this influence of rapacious grief, that grasped at what it could not obtain, the faculty of shaping images in the distance out of slight elements, and grouping them after the yearnings of the heart, grew upon me in morbid excess." Thus, De Quincey describes that at this period, when the supplication was made in the Litany on behalf of sick persons and young children, and when, from his seat in church, there might be visible through the window some fleecy clouds in a blue sky, his imagination would convert these into beds bearing sick children to heaven, whilst shadowy arms would be stretched to receive them, whilst he himself mounted towards heaven on the billows of harmony created by the organ. In all this we see self-surrender to a poetic imagination, under the influence of deep grief, wounded affection, and religious exaltation.

At this time, he declares that so great was his dejection, that under the morbid languishing of grief he must have pined into an early grave, had not events happened which compelled him "suddenly to assume the harness of life." The occurrence which now roused him was the return of his father from abroad, the father who had been hitherto a stranger to him, and who now arrived, in the last stage of consumption. At the end of a few weeks the father died.

And now his eldest brother, five or six years his senior (or nearly double his age), comes home. This brother had also up to this time been a stranger to Thomas de Quincey, owing to his unruly character having kept him from home.

The estimate which this elder brother forms of the character of his younger brother Thomas, as given in the "Autobiographic Sketches," is amusing. "My brother very naturally despised me, and, from his exceeding frankness, he took no pains to conceal that he did." "Physically, therefore, and intellectually, he looked upon me as below notice; but, morally, he assured me that he would give me a written character of the very best description. 'You're honest,' he said; 'you're willing though lazy; you would pull, if you had the strength of a flea; and though a monstrous coward, you don't run away.'" But the younger brother was evidently by no means deficient in personal courage. Under the leadership of the aggressive elder brother, a standing feud was established with the boys of a factory which the lads required to pass daily on their way to their tutor's, and in the daily skirmishes which took place the younger appears to have acquitted himself courageously, and with loyalty to his elder brother. He admits, however, that he

entered into these encounters without any of the animus which inspired his elder brother. The account given in the "Autobiography" of the employments and amusements of the brothers and sisters at this time shows a varied reading on the part of the young people, and an interest in questions usually out of the range of such young students. Speaking of the elder brother, De Quincey writes: "Books he detested, except such as he happened to write himself; and these were not a few. On all subjects known to man from the Thirty-Nine Articles of the English Church to pyrotechnics, legerdemain, magic, thaumaturgy, and necromancy, he favoured the world (which world was the nursery where I lived with my sisters) with his select opinions. On this last subject he wrote a treatise, 'How to raise a ghost; and, when you've got him down, to keep him down.'" It is difficult to understand whether much of the extravagance is really intended, or whether it be burlesque. The whole suggests, however, great cleverness on the part of the young people, with inclination to allow the fancy to run wild. But that this licence in the case of Thomas de Quincey at this time carried him to the verge of fixed delusion, and fostered a perilous loss of command over healthy thought, is shown by the ludicrous incidents related in the "Autobiography," when the elder brother constitutes himself imaginary king of an imaginary kingdom of Tigrosylvania, and the younger De Quincey king of an imaginary kingdom of Gombroon. At page 76, speaking of this fanciful freak, De Quincey writes:—

"O reader! do not laugh! I lived for ever under the terror of two separate wars in two separate worlds; one against the factory boys, in a real world of flesh and blood, of stones and brickbats, of flight and pursuit, that were anything but figurative; the other in a world purely aerial, where all the combats and the sufferings were absolute moonshine. And yet the simple truth is—that, for anxiety and distress of mind, the reality (which almost every morning's light brought round) was as nothing in comparison of that dream-kingdom which rose like a vapour from my own brain, and which apparently, by the fiat of my will, could be for ever dissolved. Ah! but no; I had contracted obligations to Gombroon; I had submitted my conscience to a yoke; and, in secret truth, *my will had no autocratic power*. Long contemplation of a shadow, earnest study for the welfare of that shadow, sympathy with the wounded sensibilities of that shadow under accumulated wrongs, these bitter experiences, nursed by brooding thought, had gradually frozen that shadow into a region of reality far denser than the material realities of brass or granite." This is a remarkable passage, as it points out, with marvellous lucidity of description, the mode of growth of a mental delusion; and in the sentence I have given in italics is contained the explanation of the particular mental deficiency of controlling power in consequence of which the imagination obtained such mastery.

Fortunately for the young enthusiastic dreamer, however, the will had still sufficient power to direct the really powerful mind

into other trains of thought, and thus the gulf of monomania was escaped. However, as this curious incident is still further developed in the "Autobiography," it becomes clear that, in this child philosopher (he could have been only seven or eight years old at this time), free scope was deliberately given to the imagination, from a belief in the supremacy of spirit over matter. Thus at page 78 occurs this passage: "To make a strife overwhelming by a thousandfold to the feelings, it must not deal with gross material interests, but with such as rise into the world of dreams, and act upon the nerves through spiritual and not through fleshly torments." Is not the spirit of the Platonic philosophy latent in this quotation?

But now comes the curious *dénouement* of this incident. The tutor has left lying on his table the works of Lord Monboddo, and the elder brother stumbles on the disquisition in which his Lordship propounds the evolutionist theory, that mankind are descended from apes, and originally had tails. "My brother," writes De Quincey, "mused on this reverie, and in a few days published an extract from some scoundrel's travels in Gombroon, according to which the Gombroonians had not emerged from this early condition of apedom." "Overwhelming to me and stunning was the ignominy of this humble discovery." The brother, "with an air of consolation, suggested that I might even now, without an hour's delay, compel the whole nation to sit down for six hours a day," for the purpose, of course, of approximating them to human form by a process of natural attrition.

This might seem the very burlesque of unreality but for what follows, which shows that with the younger brother all was as reality. "How much it would have astonished Lord Monboddo to find himself made answerable—virtually made answerable by the evidence of secret tears—for the misery of an unknown child in Lancashire; yet night and day these silent memorials of suffering were accusing him as the founder of a wound that could not be healed." I have dwelt thus long on this curious incident, as it throws much light on the mental idiosyncrasy of Thomas de Quincey, and relieves us from the necessity of considering many of his abnormal mental phenomena in after-years as being due to the action of opium.

The next incident in the biography is one which reveals the great tenderness of disposition of the young boy, and his great sympathy with helplessness and suffering, even in objects naturally repulsive. He accidentally discovers in his tutor's family two twin daughters, of weak intellect, who are employed in domestic drudgery, and treated unkindly. He explains that they are deaf and repulsive in appearance, though affectionate towards each other. Instead of shunning them, he kisses them affectionately when he meets them. This incident may be considered in connection with certain episodes in the London experiences of the "Confessions." He idealises equally in each case. The helpless suffering, the misery of misfortune, are what he sees and feels in both instances; the material frames which contain them are only secondary objects.

The period of infancy is considered by De Quincey to have extended to this point. He claims a power in his childish eye to detect grandeur and pomp of beauty, not seen by others in certain instances, and refers it to an individual mental constitution.

In his twelfth year De Quincey enters the Grammar School at Bath, and distinguishes himself as a writer of Latin verses. He there receives an injury to the head by a blow from a ruler, which necessitates his leaving school; the operation of trephining being even talked of. But he adds: "I certainly exaggerated my internal feelings, without meaning to do so, and this misled my medical attendants."

He then goes to school at Winkfield, and after one year's residence there, and in his fifteenth year, he "first stepped into the world." Of his visits to Ireland and London with Lord Westport it is needless to speak, beyond that they show the young man's mental acquirements and tastes to have been such as fitted him for the companionship of his seniors in years, and of the high in social position. Subsequently, in his visit to Laxton, Lady Carbery speaks of him as her Admirable Crichton, and makes continual demands on him for the solution of difficulties, and for the translation and meaning of Greek words in the New Testament, as applied to questions of theological doctrine. He speaks of the expansion of his intellect under this exercise, and it is impossible not to feel that his scholarship and intelligence must have been of a high order at this period, when he was a boy of some fifteen or sixteen years of age.

It was now decided that he should enter the Grammar School at Manchester, preparatory to going to Oxford, and at the Manchester school commence the physical ailments which appear to have been prolonged through life.

The first onset of disease of the digestive organs in Thomas de Quincey occurred in his seventeenth year, when he was a pupil at the Grammar School at Manchester. The attack itself he describes as "a torpor of the liver," but attended apparently by an impairment of the general health, derangement of the digestion, and by hypochondriasis. The causes of this derangement of health are sufficiently indicated in the "Autobiographic Sketches." De Quincey was anxious to go at once to Oxford, and evidently had no sympathy with the boyish associates with whom he was now brought in contact. He speaks of the "premature expansion of his mind" as already weighing on him with "sickening oppression," and rendering him intolerant of boyish society. Then there was no reasonable time given at the school for a due amount of exercise, which De Quincey always found essential to his well-being; so that, by the end of a year and a half, he writes of these causes, that they began "to eat more corrosively into my peace of mind than I had ever anticipated." And now he adds, "that over and above the killing oppression to my too sensitive system of the monotonous school tasks and the ruinous want of exercise, I had fallen under medical advice the most misleading that it is possible to imagine."

He was treated "by drastic medicines varied without end, which fearfully exasperated the complaint;" whilst he expresses the belief that the torpor of the liver under which he was labouring might have been put right in three days by the employment of mercury. It is more than probable, however, that the condition of ill-health into which he had fallen, and of which inactivity of the liver was one symptom, could only have been overcome by a removal, for a time at least, of all the agencies which had occasioned it, and by a change of hygienic conditions generally. He is roused to a better state of health by the presence for a time of a party of valued friends in Manchester; but he adds: "Lady C. retired like some golden pageant amongst the clouds, thick darkness succeeded; the ancient torpor re-established itself, and my health grew distressingly worse. Then it was, after dreadful self-conflicts, that I took the unhappy resolution of which the results are recorded in the 'Confessions.'" In the "Confessions" De Quincey writes, speaking of this epoch: "Those who have ever suffered from a profound derangement of the liver may happen to know that, of human despondencies, through all their infinite gamut, none is more deadly." Having, therefore, in vain endeavoured to obtain from his guardians a release from his school, and possessed by the idea that fresh air and exercise were essential to his recovery, he escaped from school, and betook himself to Wales; walking in the first instance to Chester, a distance of forty miles, in two days.

A week's pedestrian travelling in the Carnarvonshire mountains now "effected a revolution in his health, such as left nothing to complain of." To the condition of his health during his further sojourn of two or three months in Wales, De Quincey makes no special allusion; and, in fact, in his later editions of the "Confessions" he omits the important passage in the first edition which I shall now quote, and which, I believe, gives the true clue to the origin of that stomach derangement from which he appears to have suffered so much torment during his after-life, and which apparently drove him ultimately to the habitual use of opium. He had been only a few weeks in lodgings in Wales, when a misunderstanding with the landlady arose, with the result given in the subjoined extract:—

"I left the lodgings the self-same hour, and this turned out a very unfortunate occurrence for me, because, living henceforward at inns, I was drained of my money very rapidly. In a fortnight I was reduced to short allowance; that is, I could allow myself only one meal a day. From the keen appetite produced by constant exercise and mountain air acting on a youthful stomach, I soon began to suffer greatly on this slender regimen, for the single meal which I could venture to order was coffee or tea. Even this, however, was at length withdrawn, and afterwards, so long as I remained in Wales, I subsisted either on blackberries, hips, haws, &c., or on the casual hospitality which I now and then received in return for such little services as I had an opportunity of rendering."

Whilst his diet was as above detailed, De Quincey writes in the "Confessions" that for some weeks he carried a canvas tent not

bigger than an umbrella, manufactured by himself, and that, with no more shelter than it was able to afford, he passed on an average nine nights out of each fortnight on the hillsides. No specific mention is made of the immediate effect of these hardships, but it is not difficult to imagine what would naturally be the consequences to a delicate lad of seventeen, barely convalescent from an attack of liver derangement, with his mucous membrane in a state of irritation from a continued course of drastics, being reduced for weeks to a diet of wild berries, and passing his nights on the bare damp sides of the Welsh mountains, with the accompaniment of atmospheric moisture usual in these localities. Such agencies might well be expected to lay the foundation of serious gastric derangement, not only of a neuralgic, but of an inflammatory character. From Wales the young wanderer found his way to London, and was there subjected to a continuance of extreme hardships, both in the deprivation of food, and in passing the nights without adequate shelter or protection from cold. His symptoms and actual state are not clearly detailed at this time, but they are to be gleaned from such passages as the following in the "Confessions:"—"When I was not more than usually ill" (page 163). "But my sleep distressed me more than my watching; for besides the tumultuousness of my dreams (which were only not so awful as those which I shall have hereafter to describe as produced by opium), my sleep was never more than what is called dog-sleep, so that I could hear myself moaning, and very often I was awakened suddenly by my own voice. About this time a hideous sensation began to haunt me as soon as I fell into a slumber, which has since returned upon me at different periods of my life—viz., a sort of twitching (I know not where, but apparently about the region of the stomach), which compelled me violently to throw out my feet for the sake of relieving it. This sensation coming on as soon as I began to sleep, and the efforts to relieve it constantly awakening me, at length I slept only from exhaustion; and through increasing weakness (as I said before) I was constantly falling asleep and constantly awaking." There was "no rest that was not a prologue to terror; no sweet tremulous pulses of restoration that did not suddenly explode through rolling clamours of fiery disruption." Subsequent to this, the hapless boy, when seated at night on a doorstep, falls back in a state in which he declares that, "from the sensations I then had, I felt an inner conviction that without some powerful and reviving stimulus, I should either have died on the spot, or should at least have sunk to a point of exhaustion from which all reascent under my friendless circumstances would soon have become hopeless." A glass of spiced port wine is given to him, which he says "acted on my empty stomach (*which at that time would have rejected all solid food*) with an instantaneous power of restoration." From this statement it may be inferred that rejection of solid food by the stomach was experienced and dreaded at that period; and the symptom is important.

But we have more explicit evidence regarding this symptom in

the account he immediately gives of a subsequent experience at Eton :—

“Lord Desert placed before me a most magnificent breakfast. It was really so, but in my eyes it seemed trebly magnificent, from being the first regular meal, the first ‘good man’s table,’ that I had sat down to for months. Strange to say, however, I could scarcely eat anything. On the day when I first received my £10 bank-note, I had gone to a baker’s shop and bought a couple of rolls: this very shop I had, two months or six weeks before, surveyed with an eagerness of desire which it was almost humiliating to me to recollect. I remembered the story about Otway, and feared that there might be danger in eating too rapidly. But I had no need for alarm; my appetite was quite sunk, and *I became sick before I had eaten half of what I had bought.* This effect from eating, what approached to a meal, I continued to feel for weeks, or, when I did not experience any nausea, *part of what I ate was rejected, sometimes with acidity, sometimes immediately, and without any acidity.* On the present occasion, at Lord Desert’s table, I found myself not at all better than usual; and, in the midst of luxuries, I had no appetite. . . . I am convinced, however, that wine, although it gave me momentary relief and pleasure, contributed to strengthen my malady, for the tone of my stomach was apparently quite sunk; but by a better regimen it might sooner, and perhaps effectually, have been revived.”

Farther on in the “Confessions,” when alluding to this period of his life, he says: “And although it is true that the calamities of my novitiate in London had struck root so deeply in my bodily constitution, that afterwards they shot up and flourished afresh, and grew into a noxious umbrage, that has overshadowed and darkened my latter years, yet these second assaults of suffering were met with a fortitude more confirmed, with the resources of a mature intellect, and with alleviations how deep! from sympathising affection.” Still farther on in the “Confessions,” at page 216, he adds: “Whether this illness of 1812 had any share in that of 1813, I know not, but so it was, that in the latter year I was attacked by a most appalling irritation of the stomach, in all respects the same as that which had caused me so much suffering in youth, and accompanied by a renewal of all the old dreams.” Again, at page 232 is the following: “The boyish sufferings, whether in Wales or London, pressing upon an organ peculiarly weak in my bodily system, viz., the stomach, caused that subsequent distress and irritability of the stomach which drove me to the use of opium, as the sole remedy potent enough to control it.”

I now turn to evidences of specific stomach derangement, derived from sources other than the “Autobiography” and the “Confessions.” Mr. Page has been good enough to furnish me with the following extract from a letter of De Quincey to Charles Knight, written in 1825:—“Anxiety, long continued with me of late years, in consequence of my opium-shattering, seizes on some frail part about the stomach, and produces a specific complaint, which very soon abolishes all power of thinking at all.” Again, Mrs. Baird Smith (De Quincey’s daughter) informs me that, in describing his sufferings, her father constantly alluded to them as a sensation of gnawing; nor is his

daughter able to remember the time when her father was actually free from suffering ; and further, "Mr. Hogg remembers distinctly Mr. de Quincey saying to Professor Wilson on one occasion, when he was suffering more than usual, that he could only represent his pains by some creature gnawing him." An incapacity for ordinary food is also alluded to. I am informed that he took solid food with great difficulty ; that a couple of square inches of mutton of a particular cut was all that he could venture to take, and that only in particularly favourable circumstances ; that his most intimate friends said of him that he did not "know what it was to eat a dinner ;" and that he himself declared, in writing to an old schoolfellow in 1847, that, among many other ills, he had had "no dinner since parting from him in the eighteenth century." I am informed that when this distinguished man died, at the ripe age of seventy-five, he was attended by the late Dr. Warburton Begbie of Edinburgh, a physician of great eminence ; and the family were informed at that time that there were no indications of active specific organic disease, but rather an exhaustion of the vital powers generally. No *post-mortem* examination was made.

From these disjointed and scattered notices, we have, I believe, materials for forming an opinion on the medical case of Thomas de Quincey ; but before summing up the evidence, I will quote an extract from the Life of Richard Baxter, which has been kindly furnished to me by my friend Dr. Norman Chevers, lately Principal of the Medical College of Calcutta, as having an interesting bearing on the probable exciting cause of De Quincey's malady having originated in the crude irritating diet of wild berries in Wales. Dr. Chevers writes to me :—

"Richard Baxter attributes his great sufferings by flatulence, indigestion, &c., to the fact that he 'ate raw apples and pears and plums in great quantities for many years.' He speaks of apples as being of all things in the world his 'most deadly enemies.' He, however, says : 'I was never overwhelmed with melancholy. My distemper never went so far as to possess me with any inordinate fancies, or damp me with sinking sadness, although the physicians called it hypochondriac melancholy.'"

Let us now sum up the case of Thomas de Quincey. There was, in the first instance, general derangement of the digestive organs accompanied by torpor of the liver and hypochondriasis. In combating that state, the stomach and digestive tract were subjected to the protracted irritation of drastic medicines. Whilst the stomach and digestive organs had barely recovered themselves from this state, they were again exposed to extreme irritation and derangement from food both injurious in quality and altogether deficient in quantity. There was, at the same time, exposure to great hardship, in the way of insufficient clothing and shelter. Evidences of distinct disease of the stomach manifested themselves under the forms of pain, spasm, and rejection of food, and these symptoms were repeated at intervals, in greater or less degree, throughout life ; the irritation of the

stomach being described in one place as appalling, and the character of the pain being described as a sensation of gnawing.

These symptoms indicate, in the first instance, severe nervous irritation or gastrodynia, with, I believe, a low inflammatory condition of the mucous coat of the stomach, proceeding at times to ulceration ; not specific ulceration of a cancerous character, but the simple gastric ulcer, capable of cure under treatment and favourable conditions, yet liable to recur under any error in diet.

At the commencement of this paper I alluded to gastrodynia as a terrible and distressing disease, under the torment of which the unfortunate sufferer was frequently driven to the commission of suicide. Amongst the Hindoos of Lower Bengal, living almost entirely on a vegetable diet, this complaint assumes an aggravated type, and I shall proceed to consider it more fully. In the "Indian Annals of Medical Science for the Year 1854" is a paper by my friend and old colleague, Dr. T. W. Wilson, entitled "On Painful Affections of the Stomach, termed by the Natives of Bengal, Peetsool." Dr. Wilson points out in his paper that several diseased conditions of the stomach, varying from a simple neuralgic condition of the gastric nerves to ulceration of a simple or even specific cancerous character, are confounded by the natives under the common name of Peetsool, though the element common to them all, and on which the attention of the sufferer is naturally concentrated, is the pain by which these conditions are accompanied.

Dr. Wilson writes: "The pain is chiefly confined to the pit of the stomach, extending to the right hypogastrium ; it is of a gnawing or cutting kind. The patients sometimes experience temporary relief from pressure, and they may be seen making it by cloths bound round the person, or with a ball placed on the pit of the stomach.

"So obstinate is this affection considered by the natives, that it is attributed to a weapon in the hands of Siva, and though that deity inflicts the blow, he cannot remove the disease ; the sufferers in consequence often despair and seek relief in suicide."

My own experience, acquired in Bengal, in a district adjoining that in which Dr. Wilson was stationed, agrees entirely with what he has advanced regarding the character and severity of the disease, which I had frequent opportunities of observing. (I may add that the suffering which it occasions I found best relieved by opium or morphia combined with bismuth or magnesia.) On referring to my note-book, I find that, from May 1847 to June 1849, during which time I was Civil Surgeon of the district of Pubna, out of a large number of cases of suicide, referred to me by the magistrate for official report, in as many as nine cases the reason given by relatives for the fatal act was unbearable abdominal pain. It is true that all were not cases of Peetsool (or Sool, as I usually heard the disease designated), but in all the fatal act of suicide was attributed to persistent unbearable pain in one or other of the abdominal organs. In four cases the disease was distinctly declared to have been Sool (gastrodynia) ; in the fifth case the pain was still referred to the digestive organs, but not specially to the stomach ; and in the other

cases the pain was described as having been abdominal, but was not specially localised.

Dr. Chevers, in his valuable work on "Indian Medical Jurisprudence," refers specially to this class of cases, and he gives a translation of a remarkable passage from the Hindoo Shastras, which shows that suicide is, by implication at least, permitted in these writings. The passage, moreover, is one of many occurring in the Hindoo Vedas and Shastras, which reveal the fact that, beneath the idolatrous excrescences by which the Hindoo creed has been buried, there exists a faith of rare power and beauty, in its assertion of the supremacy and indestructibility of spirit, and of the subordination and corruptibility of matter. Had the Hindoo sage received the later revelation, that the spirit is purified and elevated through its connection with bodily suffering, his creed would have come nearer to the perfect truth, and the hecatombs of victims who yearly have perished in India by their own acts would, like the Christian philosopher, have lived, and learned the Christian duty of resignation.

The following is the translation to which I have alluded :—

"A mansion with bones for its rafters and beams, with nerves for its cords, with muscles and blood for mortar, with skin for its outward covering, filled with no sweet perfume, but loaded with foul refuse—a mansion infested with sickness and sorrow, the seat of malady, haunted with the quality of darkness, incapable of standing long—such a mansion of the vital soul lets its occupier always cheerfully quit."

I have, I believe, now fully established my proposition that gastrodynia in its aggravated form is a terrible and distressing disease ; and, in an aggravated form, I believe that Thomas de Quincey suffered from it. If he escaped from the promptings of the creed of the Hindoo sage, it was probably due to the teachings inaugurated in that infant nursery, where the brother and the saintly sister drew a common inspiration from that book which "ruled and swayed" them "as mysteriously as music." That De Quincey should have suffered in an aggravated degree from any nervous irritation might be inferred from his sensitive nervous temperament, and he appears to have been severely tried by neuralgic pains in the nerves of the face and jaws. But there is still a certain amount of light which may be thrown on the case of this sorely tried man, derivable from the researches of Dr. Brinton, who made a special study of gastric ulceration ; and I have already stated my belief that, in addition to the purely nervous element in De Quincey's case, there was probably also gastric ulcer—ulcer of a simple, unspecific character, healing under opium and the regulation of diet, and recurring when the stomach was not carefully managed. I think this theory is borne out by the circumstances and exciting causes attending the outbreak of the attack (commencing probably under the diet of hips and haws in Wales), and by the subsequent symptoms. Dr. Brinton, in dealing with the causes of this complaint, writes, that the disease "seems to fall with disproportionate

severity and frequency on those who suffer from the ills implied by penury, excessive toil, insufficient and unwholesome food, foul air, mental anxiety, and those habits of intemperance which are the effect as well as cause of such misery." The last of these agencies we leave out of consideration; but the remaining agents in the catalogue of evils had undoubtedly exerted their full influence on the hapless boy, De Quincey. The character of the pain is also insisted on by Dr. Brinton. In the earliest stages little more than a feeling of weight, it becomes "a burning sensation, and at last a gnawing pain, that produces a kind of sickening depression." The following observation of Dr. Brinton regarding the recurrence of pain has a curious illustration, I believe, in the extract from De Quincey's letter to Charles Knight already quoted:—"The partially subjective character of the pain in gastric ulcer receives a good illustration from the manner in which it is often affected by mental changes. Amongst these, we may specially allude to the depressing passions of sudden fear, anxiety, or anger, as frequently bringing on a paroxysm of pain, the severity and duration of which exceed those of the attacks produced by distension of the stomach by food."

This remark of Dr. Brinton regarding the inability of the stomach, when suffering from gastric ulcer or from its effects, to bear distension, without pain, gives a clue to De Quincey's general incapacity for ordinary solid food, either stimulating in quality or large in quantity. Supposing De Quincey to have been subject to gastric ulcer, it is evident that, even when healed, its tender cicatrix would be subjected to painful tension on occasion of any distension of the stomach, and thereby be a source, more or less, of continued suffering.

As regards treatment, I do not purpose alluding to any of the remedies recommended by Dr. Brinton, with the exception of opium, as it is my desire to show that, whether led instinctively or otherwise to that drug, it was, as far as human aid went, to opium that De Quincey was indebted for relief from grievous bodily anguish, and for the prolongation of his life to a ripe old age. Alluding to the injurious local action of alcoholic drinks in gastric ulcer, Dr. Brinton inquires, "whether there are no stimulants which may afford us the advantages of alcohol without its disadvantages?" "The importance of this question, he adds, "will excuse my pointing out, that what I have already had occasion to say respecting the merits of opium will to some extent apply to the class of sedatives in general. But the peculiar stimulant effects of opium make it by far the most valuable of them all." "As regards mere facts, I am quite certain that, though the pain often present in these cases is, of course, an additional indication for the use of opium, yet it is by no means the chief (far less the only) guide to its administration. It is not as an anodyne, not even as a sedative, that opium seems to be most useful. On the contrary, my experience would lead me to conclude that it is especially in ulcers of long duration, of large size, of obstinate character, and in broken,

exhausted constitutions, that this invaluable remedy comes most fully into play ; and that the condition these circumstances presuppose being present, its use is not one whit less advantageous, even though the habitual pain is trifling, or though (far from having to replace the customary alcohol of the drunkard) it is prescribed for a patient who has been always of temperate (or even abstemious) habits." Dr. Brinton goes on to urge "the importance of giving opium in this dangerous and frequent disease," not only for the purpose of relieving pain or checking irritation, but also "to support the strength, to buoy up the nervous system, and to check the waste of the tissues generally."

Having conducted my argument to this point, therefore, I would submit that the case of Thomas de Quincey, in its connection with the use of opium, must be regarded as one of bodily disease, for the control of which opium was the sole efficient remedy ; and that this great writer cannot be considered an opium-eater (as he has styled himself) in the ordinary sense of the word. Opium was not resorted to by him, in the first instance, for sensuous gratification, but for the relief of acute suffering ; and if, under the sensibly curative action of the drug, it was continued for a long period, equally pertinacious were the assaults of the cruel malady which called for its employment. But let the eloquent writer speak for himself.

At page 1 of the "Confessions" he says he has often been asked how it was that he had become an opium-eater ; and with reference to the third of certain suppositions he writes : "Thirdly and lastly, was it [yes, by passionate anticipation, I answer, before the question is finished], was it on a sudden, overmastering impulse derived from bodily anguish ? Loudly I repeat, Yes : loudly and indignantly, as in answer to a wilful calumny. Simply as an anodyne it was, under the mere coercion of pain the severest, that I first resorted to opium."

It was not, however, for his stomach ailment that opium was in the first instance taken, but to relieve the pain of neuralgia of the nerves of the face and jaws.

Again, at page 217 of the "Confessions," De Quincey writes, after stating that he had been attacked again "by a most appalling irritation of the stomach, in all respects the same as that which had caused" him "so much suffering in youth, and accompanied by a revival of all the old dreams :"—"Now, then, it was only in the year 1813 that I became a regular and confirmed (no longer an intermitting) opium-eater. And here," he writes, "I find myself in a perplexing dilemma. Either, on the one hand, I must exhaust the reader's patience by such a detail of my malady, and of my struggles with it, as might suffice to establish the fact of my inability to wrestle any longer with irritation and constant suffering ; or, on the other hand, by passing lightly over the critical part of my story, I must forego the benefit of a stronger impression left on the mind of the reader, and must lay myself open to the misconstruction of having slipped by the easy and gradual steps of self-indulging persons from the first to the final stage of opium-eating (a misconstruction to

which there will be a lurking predisposition in most readers, from my previous acknowledgments)."

"No; believe all that I ask of you, viz., that I could resist no longer." "This, then, let me repeat; I postulate that, at the time I began to take opium daily, I could not have done otherwise. Whether, indeed, afterwards I might not have succeeded in breaking off the habit, even when it seemed to me that all efforts would be unavailing, and whether many of the innumerable efforts which I *did* make might not have been carried much further, and my gradual reconquests of lost ground might not have been followed up much more energetically—these are questions which I must decline." But when the writer adds a little farther on: "I cannot face misery, whether my own or not, with an eye of sufficient firmness, and am little capable of encountering present pain for the sake of any reverentary benefit;" and when, towards the end of the "Confessions," at page 232, he adds: "The opium would probably never have been promoted into the dignity of a daily and a lifelong resource, had it not proved itself to be the one sole agent equal to the task of tranquillising the miseries left behind by the youthful privations,"—when, I repeat, the author has made these statements, he entirely removes his case from the region of ethics into that of therapeutics. De Quincey's was not a case of opium-eating in the ordinary and objectionable sense of the word; it was one of the continued use of opium (very probably at times in unwarrantable excess), rendered necessary by persistent chronic disease. And, be it observed, quantities of the drug as enormous as those consumed at times by De Quincey have been given under medical sanction. In a case under the care of two distinguished physicians of Philadelphia the quantity of opium was gradually increased to "three pints of laudanum," "besides a considerable quantity of solid opium," in the twenty-four hours.* In this and in similar cases the amount of the drug must be regarded as the measure of the physical pain it was given to relieve.

The following extract, from a private letter to his wife, written by my lamented friend Colonel Baird Smith, of the Bengal Engineers, after the capture of Delhi, given in Sir John Kaye's "Sepoy War" (p. 547, vol. iii.), may be cited here, as it has an opposite bearing on this point:—

"An attack of camp scurvy had filled my mouth with sores, shaken every joint in my body, and covered me all over with livid spots, so that I was marvellously unlovely to look upon. A smart knock on the ankle-joint from the splinter of a shell that burst in my face, in itself, however, a mere bagatelle of a wound, had been of necessity neglected under the pressing and incessant calls upon me, and had grown worse and worse, till the whole foot below the ankle became a black mass, and seemed to threaten mortification. I insisted, however, on being allowed to use it till the place was taken, mortification or no; and though the pain was sometimes horrible, I carried my point and kept

* Pereira's "Materia Medica," p. 2111.

up to the last. On the day after the assault I had an unlucky fall on some bad ground, and it was an open question for a day or two whether I hadn't broken my left arm at the elbow. Fortunately it turned out to be only a severe sprain; but I am still conscious of the wrench it gave me. And, to crown the whole pleasant catalogue, I was worn to a shadow by a constant diarrhœa, and consumed as much opium, with as little effect, as would have done credit to my father-in-law (Mr. de Quincey)." Opium and brandy, he says elsewhere, were his daily sustenance, and that they had no other effect upon him than that of increasing his capacity for work. "Appetite for food I had none, but I forced myself to eat sufficient to sustain life. . . . The excitement of the work was so great, that no lesser one seemed to have any chance against it; and I certainly never found my intellect clearer or my nerves stronger in my life. It was only my wretched body that was weak; and the moment the real work was done by our becoming complete masters of Delhi, I broke down without delay, and discovered that, if I wished to live, I must continue no longer the system that had kept me up till the crisis was past. With it passed away as if in a moment all desire to stimulate, and a perfect loathing of my late staff of life took possession of me."

Let it not for a moment be imagined that it is intended in any way by these remarks to countenance opium-eating as a mere vicious indulgence. In a perfectly healthy condition of the system, and in a well-balanced state of the mental faculties, I can conceive nothing but mischief to arise from the use of opium, casually or habitually, in any quantity sufficient to produce an appreciable physiological action on the mental or bodily functions. But what I would insist on is, that in the case of Thomas de Quincey there was not only not a healthy condition of system, but a want of healthy balance in the mental faculties—the imagination being so abnormally active, even from the earliest infancy, as to dominate at times the reason, despite the fact that the intellectual powers were of a high order, amounting to genius. It may perhaps be said that the entire nervous system was in a state of nervous exaltation. Bearing this in mind, and that the general state of the nervous system was abnormal, it will be felt that the action of opium in such a case might be likewise abnormal. I believe it to have been so in the case of De Quincey, from the time of its first employment, in an ordinary medicinal dose, to assuage the pain of a neuralgic attack.

During my Indian service, extending over some twenty years, I was always in charge of hospitals, military and civil, in India and in China, and during the latter years of my service I was at the head of the Medical College and hospital of Calcutta. I may say that I must have been prescribing opium at all times to a considerable percentage of the patients under my charge, and yet I never witnessed such effects as those described by De Quincey at page 195 of the "Confessions" (vol. i., "The Works of Thomas de Quincey, Third Edition, Adam and Charles Black"), as resulting from a first medicinal dose of the drug.

To the majority, probably, the effect of a single medicinal dose of

opium, given under such circumstances, would be, in addition to the relief of pain, to produce some hours of sleep, more or less disturbed by dreams, with a light head on waking, some nausea perhaps, and a parched mouth.

De Quincey speaks of a "revulsion," "a resurrection from its lowest depths of the inner spirit," "an apocalypse of the world within," with a vanishing of his pains. Farther on he says that, whilst "wine disorders the mental faculties, opium, on the contrary (if taken in a proper manner), introduces amongst them the most exquisite order, regulation, and harmony;" and that, in the case of the opium-eater, he "feels that the diviner part of his nature is paramount—that is, the moral affections are in a state of cloudless serenity, and high over all the great light of the majestic intellect." It is requisite not to be carried away by these eloquent utterances. Opium cannot communicate to the brain any power or faculty of which it is not already possessed; although (as in De Quincey's case), by subduing an enemy which had by its painful assaults on a remote part of the nervous system temporarily paralysed the central powers of the intellect, it might again restore harmony of action to these powers. It could in no way *create* moral affections, though it might resuscitate them, by removing from them an overpowering load of physical suffering. It could add no iota to the great light of the majestic intellect, although when this might be suffering a temporary eclipse—as was too frequently the case with this great writer, when his gnawing malady pervaded his entire consciousness with torments which dominated the power of thought—it might, under such circumstances, restore that great light, by dissipating the shadow that obscured it.

De Quincey attached an importance to his dream-experiences which needs no special consideration. They did not originate with the use of opium, as the history of his years of infancy and youth clearly show; but so fascinated was this intensely intellectual man with everything pertaining to mind, that its workings under the lawless guidance of imagination—the children of his fancy—appeared to have had a claim on his affection which, perhaps, with greater safety, might have been entirely reserved for the offspring of his rigorously controlled thought.

It is requisite to say, in conclusion, that Thomas de Quincey, about the year 1845, or fourteen years before his death, relinquished the excessive use of opium; from which it may be inferred that the lesion of the stomach, from which he had suffered for so many years of his life, had by that time ceased to occasion him suffering; and this would be in accordance with the fact that Dr. Warburton Begbie, at the time of this distinguished man's death, was unable to discover the existence of specific disease. This is further confirmed by the recollection of Mr. James Hogg. He states that though, during the first year or two of his acquaintance with Mr. de Quincey, he heard him complain of "gnawing pains in the stomach," in the later years any reference to such pains ceased to be made.

II.

DE QUINCEY'S FATHER AS AN AUTHOR.

The reader will have noticed that De Quincey speaks of his father as an anonymous author, and though he does not mention the title of any of his writings, or where they appeared, he makes explicit reference to an account of a tour he had printed. Owing to the kindness of Mr. A. Ireland, of Manchester, we are glad to be able to extract the following from *Notes and Queries* for November 20, 1875, as likely to have an interest of its own :—

“DE QUINCEY'S FATHER: ‘TOUR IN THE MIDLAND COUNTIES IN 1772.’—Who was the author of ‘A Tour in the Midland Counties of England, performed in the Summer of 1772 (by T— Q—),’ which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1774 (vol. xlv. p. 206, continued in four following numbers), and which, the editor tells us in a note, ‘was the first production of the writer's pen?’ I should at once have ascribed it, as the initials agree, to Thomas Quincey, the father of the opium-eater, who published, his son tells us, a similar tour, but which, notwithstanding a long-continued quest by myself and others, has not yet turned up. As, however, he would only be nineteen when the tour was made, and twenty-one when it was printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the doubt is whether the composition is exactly that which so young a person would be likely to have produced. The style would rather seem to indicate the writer to have been a man of mature years and experience. Still, this is not conclusive as an objection, as early acquaintance with the world and its business ripens in the mind quite as much as advance of years. Thomas Quincey's success in mercantile pursuits—he died at the age of thirty-nine—and the codicils to his will, giving directions as to the carrying on and disposal of his business, are sufficient to show that he was by no means an ordinary person, and his son tells us that he had been a great traveller. The ‘Tour in the Midland Counties’ appears to have been made from London, to which the tourist returned on its conclusion. Thomas Quincey had not then settled in Manchester, and accordingly his name is not found in the Directories of 1772 and 1773. If the ‘Tour’ in the *Gentleman's Magazine* was really written by him, the probability is that his son, though aware of the fact of his father having composed such a journal, did not know where it had appeared; otherwise it would be difficult to account for his having barely noticed the existence of a production in which he might have taken a just pride, and which would have afforded him a paternal peg which he might have hung many a digression and disquisition upon. Thomas de Quincey was only seven when his father died, and from absence and other circumstances had little personal knowledge of him. In that fine piece of painting, his description of his father's return home in a dying state, he does not attempt to portray his features or give any idea of what he was like in person. I ought, perhaps, to mention, that in the ‘Tour’ the writer has a good deal to say in the description of Boston, in Lincolnshire, and I find in the will of Thomas Quincey that Henry Gee, of Boston, merchant, was appointed one of his trustees, and that a legacy is given to ‘his respected friend and kinsman John Oxenford,’ who resided in that neighbourhood.

“JAS. CROSSLEY.”

III.

MR. DE QUINCEY'S FAMILY.

Mr. de Quincey's family consisted of five sons and three daughters, as follow :—

1. William, who died about 1835, in his eighteenth year, referred to by his father as a student of great promise.
2. Margaret, who died in 1871, in Ireland, at the residence of her husband, Mr. Robert Craig. He died in 1881.
3. Horace, who was an officer in the 26th Cameronians, went to China with Sir Hugh Gough, was engaged in the campaign of 1841-42, and died there of some kind of malarious fever in the end of 1842.
4. Francis, who began life as a clerk in Mr. Kelsall's office, but formed a liking for medical studies, and, under great disadvantages, educated himself at Edinburgh for the medical profession. He was for some time assistant-physician at the Lunatic Asylum, Morningside, Edinburgh, and then went out to Brazil, and was on the way to success, when, returning to his home up-country from Rio Janeiro in 1861, where he had been on family business, he was seized with yellow fever, and succumbed from want of medical treatment ; there being no doctor at the place where he was taken ill.
5. Paul Frederick, who was an officer in the 70th Queen's Regiment, carried the Queen's Colours at the Battle of Sobraon, and served all through the Indian Mutiny. In 1857 he came home on promotion, and accompanied his father on that trip to Ireland. He returned to India ; and attracting the notice of Sir Hugh Rose (Lord Strathnairn), was made brigade-major. This appointment by merit he was obliged to relinquish, owing to his regiment being ordered to New Zealand for active service. From what he saw of the country there, he resolved to settle, and purchased land ; but he again took service for a time as military secretary to General Galloway, when he was employed in organising the New Zealand Militia. For his services in this capacity he received from the Colonial Government a considerable grant of land, which, with his purchased property, he now holds, being married there. Colonel de Quincey was in 1889 appointed Sergeant-at-Arms to the New Zealand Parliament without any application on his part.
6. Florence, married Colonel Baird Smith, who died in India in 1861.
7. Julius, who died in 1833, about four years of age.
8. Emily.

IV.

MR. GRINFIELD AND HIS WORKS.

The Rev. E. W. Grinfield, who, in the last letter printed in this work, speaks of himself so modestly as a theological student, was the author of between twenty and thirty works of varying importance. His "*Novum Testamentum Græcum, Editio Hellenistica. Scholia in N. T. instruxit atque ornavit E. Grinfield,*" published in 1843-48, in four vols. 8vo, was his greatest work. It was designed to show the close connection of the Greek Testament with the Septuagint. It contains upwards of 30,000 doctrinal and grammatical illustrations, which are arranged respectively under each verse for the convenience of the student and divine. Allibone says:—"We need hardly say that the labours of the editor have been great indeed; to quote from his preface: '*Per decem annos in hæc editione conficiendâ operam studiumque impensè elocavi.*' He intended to have increased his labours by the addition of a threefold collation of the Hebrew, LXX., and New Testament. For an account of this truly great work we must refer to Horne's '*Bibl. Bibl.*,' and the *London Christian Remembrancer* for April 1848." As a natural sequel to his Hellenistic edition of the Greek Testament, he wrote an "*Apology for the Septuagint,*" in which its claims to Biblical and canonical authority are stated and vindicated. This was published in 1850, and may rank as the next in value of his numerous works.

V.

THE GIFT TO COLERIDGE.

As the matter of the gift to Coleridge, and De Quincey's reference to it, has been at various times made the subject of comment, and misconceptions have arisen on various points, we give here a letter written to De Quincey's eldest daughter on the subject by Dr. Shadworth Hodgson, together with some notes on the subject:—

"Cottle's '*Early Recollections of Coleridge*' were published in 1837. They give not for the first time, but for the first time *in detail*, the account of De Quincey's present to Coleridge of £300.

"In June of same year, 1837, a review of Cottle's book in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* repeats the whole story, and remarks thereon:—

"'We would charitably hope that some of Coleridge's younger relatives have until now been ignorant of this fact, or surely delicacy, if not gratitude, would have restrained their pens.'

"The first mention of the fact of the gift appears to have been made by the giver himself in an article on Coleridge, one of a series,

in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* for September 1834. The whole passage is the following:—

“‘How much more awful, then, and magnificent a wreck, when a mind so regal as that of Coleridge is overthrown, or threatened with overthrow, not by a visitation of Providence, but the treachery of his own will, and the conspiracy, as it were, of himself against himself! Was it possible that this ruin had been caused or hurried forward by the dismal degradations of pecuniary difficulties? That was worth inquiring. I will here mention briefly that I did inquire, two days after, and in consequence of what I heard, I contrived that a particular service should be tendered to Mr. Coleridge, a week after, through the hands of Mr. Cottle of Bristol, which might have the effect of liberating his mind from anxiety for a year or two, and thus rendering his great powers disposable to their natural uses. That service was accepted by Coleridge. To save him any feelings of distress, all names were concealed; but in a letter written by him, about fifteen years after this time, I found that he had become aware of all the circumstances, perhaps through some indiscretion of Mr. Cottle’s.* A more important question I never ascertained, viz., whether this service had the effect of seriously lightening his mind,’ &c., &c.

“However, the extreme acceptability of the present at the time to Coleridge’s resources is now known from Cottle’s book.

“In the *British Magazine* for March 1835 is a very vehement and angry article by Julius Charles Hare (Archdeacon Hare) in reply to the articles on Coleridge in *Tait’s Magazine* in 1834. Yet he makes no charge on the mention of the gift, at least in skimming through the article I observed none; and it therefore could not have struck him in an unfavourable light, though not at all likely to look favourably on the writer, as the angry nature of the article (in the *British*) will show.

“45 CONDUIT STREET, Feb. 17, 1861.

“MY DEAR MARGARET,—A letter from Florence tells me that you would wish to see the extracts and dates relating to the gift to Coleridge.

“Supposing the first mention of the matter to have come from your father, which *may* not after all have been the case, I am unable to see any failure in honourable feeling whatever in that. It was not done to found any claim to gratitude upon, or for any ostentatious purpose whatever; but as it is introduced in the article September 1834, it ministers to the glory of Coleridge alone, as a proof of the influence of his genius and intellect being as permanent as it was powerful—a proof of the admiration, that is, felt for him by your father in 1807, and lasting without diminution till the repetition of that admiration in the article September 1834. It materially aids to set forth the high appreciation of Coleridge’s mind, against which had to be set off the heavy literary failings and plagiarisms with which these articles of your father charge him, which charges it is that move the anger of Archd. Hare. In fact, it is not the mere fact of the mentioning a pecuniary gift that is any fault at all; but the

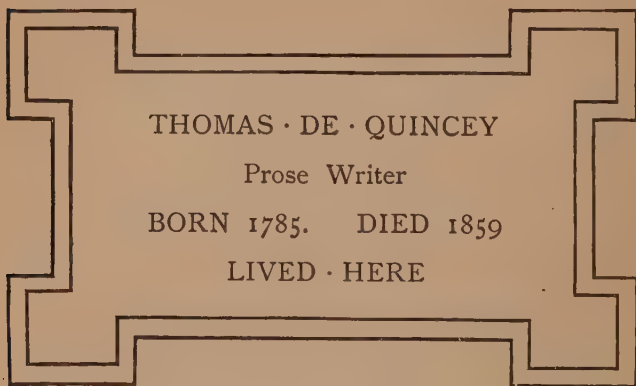
* This Cottle’s book confirms. Between 1807 (date of gift) and 1834 it must have been known to many people; but perhaps only among Coleridge’s intimate friends, and not as published in any way, though even this may have been.

question is, what the circumstances are that give point and meaning to the mention. I do not believe there is ground for a moment's uneasiness of feeling with regard to it; nor do I think that any fairly and thoroughly judging person could be unfavourably impressed towards your father by the facts of the case, as they must be supposed to stand." . . .

VI.

COMMEMORATIVE PLATE IN EDINBURGH.

Mr. J. R. Findlay, one of the most intimate friends of De Quincey's later years, has caused a commemorative plate to be affixed to the wall of the house 42 Lothian Street, Edinburgh, of which the following is a reduced copy:—



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